



PERCY CUNNINGHAM MATHER

THE MAKING OF A PIONEER

PERCY MATHER OF CENTRAL ASIA

By

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THIS VOLUME IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO
THE PIONEER'S MOTHER
ELIZABETH MATHER



AUTHORS' NOTE

NEARLY all the letters used in this volume were written by Percy Mather to his parents or to his sister. In a life shut away from almost every channel of self-expression, he delighted in the familiar intercourse of relating the incidents of everyday life to the "loved ones" in Fleetwood. The letters have been edited, as required, by the authors.

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"Therefore, with all this host of witnesses encircling us, we must strip off every handicap, strip off sin with its clinging folds, to run our appointed course with steadiness, our eyes fixed upon Jesus as the pioneer and the perfection of faith—upon Jesus who, in order to reach his own appointed joy, steadily endured the cross, thinking nothing of its shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

(Moffatt translation).



FOREWORD

“PIONEER—A foot-soldier with spade and pickaxe who goes ahead to prepare the road for the advance of the army.”—*Oxford Dictionary*.

Nor only the army, but every sphere of conquest has its pioneers. This book is the story of a missionary pioneer and as such records the life-work of one called to unusual service. Such “fearful gospelling” is not the lot of most missionaries but Percy Mather had to bear the burden of his particular commission; he was pre-ordained to the work and fashioned from the stuff which can stand the strain of such a life.

Certain characteristics are common to all pioneers and some of these characteristics are pleasant while others are unpleasant. They are not an easy-going class of people and are subject to an inarticulate urge, the impact of a driving-force pushing them forward to further effort and carrying them into what other men call “impossible situations.”

The greatest task, once accomplished, loses interest for the pioneer, and by the time the public is aware of his achievement, he has caught sight

of a further goal and is hot-foot for its conquest. Accustomed to sweep wide horizons with telescopic vision, it is difficult for him to focus to what seems a restricted view, yet, though a wilful race, pioneers are not a conceited people and often look with awe on such gifts of administration as enable other men to construct a road where they themselves were only able to cut a rough path.

The very nature of the pioneer's calling militates against pride. He is the humble *pion*, the foot-soldier, and the implements of his toil are a spade and pickaxe, nothing more showy than this. With bill and hook he cuts away the tangle of superstition, with the spade he digs out the undergrowth of antagonisms, and with his grubbing axe he hacks at the tangled roots of prejudices. Thus, if he be a missionary pioneer, he makes the first contacts, delivers the first witness and acts as sample of the bulk coming up behind.

This volume tells the life story of a man whom God sent forth into Central Asia and who, to the surprise of his own friends, proved himself a pioneer of God's own making. He cut his way unhindered by handicaps, undaunted by any task however formidable, and has left behind a rough track to mark the way towards reaching the Central Asian tribes.

Missionary phraseology includes the incongruous term "appointed to pioneer work," an expression which is a travesty of the true case, for no man can be called "pioneer" until he has proved himself to be one. The missionary pioneer is heaven ordained, not man appointed, and blessed is that Society which recognises the Divine ordination. Speaking geographically, the work of the pioneer has been carried so far that little remains to be done, and in the missionary sphere the opening up of untouched land is nearing accomplishment. Therefore the urgent call to-day is not only for sappers but for an inspired, reliable, capable, persevering vanguard composed of men and women who know how to level the road which has been roughly cleared and make it a highway for the Lord. Unless such are forthcoming the cutting must inevitably be recaptured by the jungle.

The greatest enemies of the pioneer's work in any sphere, are those pseudo-pioneers, men who have been spoken of as "the clever chaps that follow . . . come a dozen men together . . . never knew the desert fears"—men so lost to all sense of honour that, while using the pioneer's lonely cairns and landmarks, they refuse to consolidate his road and leave his well-cut track to vanish and his memory to be obliterated with it.

The message of this book is two-fold. It is first to the man or woman who is thrust out to the exacting demands of missionary pioneering. It will help such to visualise in detail the renunciations of their calling and enable them to "sit down first and calculate the cost whether they be able to meet it." It is secondly to those who follow up, urging them to strengthen the effort of the pioneers in honesty and simplicity of heart. Their contribution calls for skill, patience, humility, insight, wisdom and for great reverence. The vanguard should be equipped with far more delicate instruments than spade and pickaxe, for on it rests the responsibility of finally conquering the jungle. It finds its way by the pioneer's marks and bearings, and it is owing to his track that it gets through at all, therefore a vanguard worthy of its name thanks God at every water-hole which the pioneer dug, and salutes at every clearing where the mark of his axe is visible.

A PICTURE TO INTRODUCE PERCY MATHER

IT was a dark, stormy night. The great rolling billows raced one another towards the Fleetwood foreshore, then each in turn raised its colossal head before it crashed in full force on to the beach, retreating with a greedy sucking strength back into Morecambe Bay, churning sand, stones and all it could devour, into its mighty maw.

The people of Fleetwood were more concerned with things of the sea than things of the land, and many a woman's heart was out at sea with her man that night, as she mechanically went about the cottage and put the kettle on the hob, stirring the fire as she did so.

"There's a terrible gale on to-night," she would say; "the Lord have mercy on them that's out in it."

Suddenly a loud report like that of a gun! She drops the poker, and simultaneously every man and woman in Fleetwood stands tense.

One rocket! Is it only lifeboat practice? Another! The lifeboat call! A wreck! The town is filled with the sound of clattering feet. Everyone is out, everyone is on the run, and everyone is making for the lifeboat-house.

Men and women alike are bareheaded and wear no coats, and in an amazingly short time the boat-

house is surrounded by an eager crowd. Some scramble down on to the beach, others hang round the door, peering through the cracks, and everyone is bent on finding out what has happened. A distress flare is seen, and in its glare the wreck shows up. She's a barque, helpless on the Pilling Sands and being battered by the billows. The crew can be seen huddled together on the poop.

No time to be lost. The men of the lifeboat crew are pulling on their oil-skins, sou'westers and cork jackets, and each climbs to his place.

"Half a min-ut, lads—theer's a dog or summat under me feet. Nay, it's nooan a dog, it's a lad. Why, it's that Percy Mather! If theer's owt exciting going on, he's sure to be int' midst of it."

The stern voice of David Leadbetter, the coxswain, was raised :

"Turn him out!" he shouted, and from under the thwarts, a lithe boy was hauled out and dropped overboard on to the floor of the lifeboat-house.

"Home's the place for you on a night like this, me lad."

"Art aw read? Knock her off!"

The big slide-doors are pushed back, and the *Maude Pickup* glides down the slip-way. Her mast, which has been lying in the boat, is hauled up by the men and fixed in position as she moves along, rapidly increasing her speed. The crowd cheers her as she goes. Then comes the great plunge

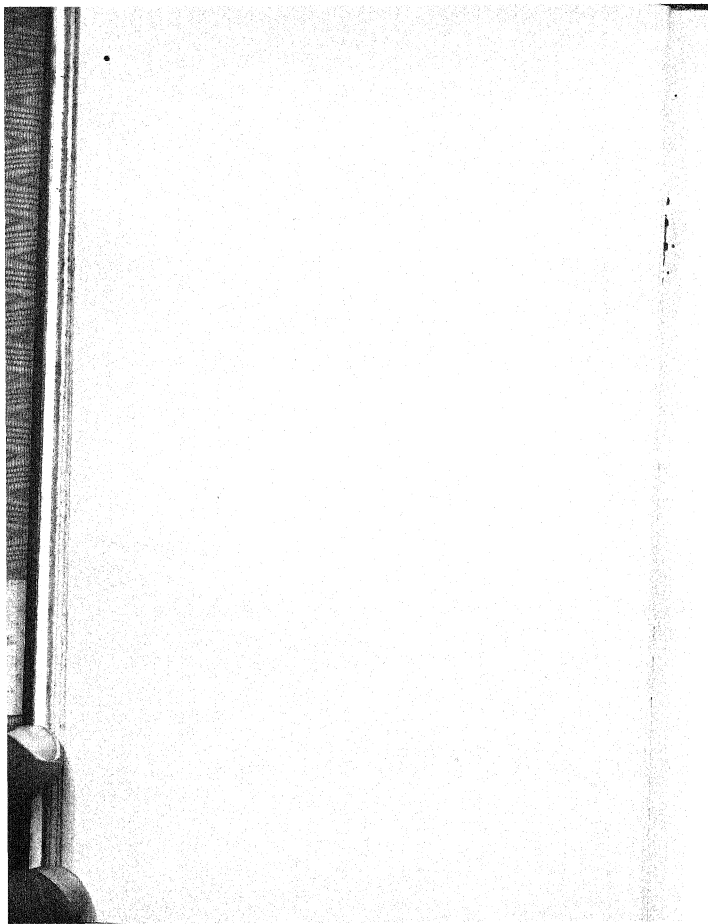
into the water. She is covered from stem to stern by a huge wave, and she shakes herself like a shaggy dog, the water pouring off her on both sides. The brown sails are set, away she goes into the darkness.

Meanwhile, young Percy Mather was tearing down to the North End where the tug was already getting up steam to tow the lifeboat out to the wreck more quickly than sails and oars could take her. Under cover of darkness he crept aboard, and immediately began to busy himself inconspicuously, as though he were a member of the crew.

They were half-way down the wide estuary before he was discovered the second time, and then he did not care, for it was too late for the boat to turn back and drop him.

Boy as he was, he knew no fear. There was life-saving business on hand, and he was thrilled by the thought that he was in it.

THE MATERIAL



THE MATERIAL

WHEN the Protestant coastguardsman, Thomas Cunningham, came to the little village of Enniscrone on the west coast of Ireland, he must needs begin to cause trouble by falling in love with a bonnie Catholic girl, and she, even though warned that she imperilled her eternal welfare by responding to his affection, loved him and made up her mind to marry him.

He was a good man, and on his lonely patrols of the wild Sligo coast, where the great Atlantic rollers tore at the rocks, looked out on life and saw it in a big way. He therefore dared to ask Sarah Kilcullen to cut herself adrift from home and kindred by becoming wife to a Protestant, even though their union must remain unrecognised and unblest by the priest.

Of this marriage were born twelve children. The eldest was a girl, and her mother, possibly to compensate her own parents for the distress she had caused them, took the child and gave her to the grandparents to be brought up. Thus it came about that she was almost a stranger to her own father and mother, and scarcely known to her brothers and sisters.

After her marriage Sarah Cunningham was never

seen by her children to go inside a Catholic Church, nor did the parish priest ever cross her threshold. The breach with her own family was so wide that she scarcely ever visited her parents' house, though they lived but a few miles away.

There was no Protestant Church at Enniscrone, but the believing parent, as by authority of the Scriptures, acted as priest to his own household, and led daily prayers and Sunday classes in the cottage living-room, where, sitting with the children around the table, he taught them the Bible.

There was a migratory instinct among these boys and girls, which has scattered them to the four corners of the globe. Some of them landed in Australia, some in America, one in Africa, and others have been entirely lost sight of in distant lands. Sarah and Kate, who were twins, left home to be joint-housekeepers to a Presbyterian minister in the town of Westport. When this minister, Rev. W. Reid, moved to England and accepted a church in Carlisle, his sister went with him. Her great friend was Marianne Cunningham, the eldest daughter at home, who had developed into a fine, serious, responsible young woman. She was so much attracted by the warm evangelical ministry of Mr. Reid that she also found employment in Carlisle and joined her friend there.

After some time she married John Blake Penfold,

of Brampton, Cumberland. When she returned to Ireland she herself was the proud mother of twin boys, and after spending a time in her father's home she came back to England, bringing with her her younger sister Eliza, then about thirteen years of age. She was a good disciplinarian, and Eliza owed to her sister the benefit of a sterling religious upbringing, and the habit of measuring every action of life by the standard of Holy Scripture. When Eliza left Marianne's home it was to be nurse at Brinscall Hall, where her services were highly valued. A few years later she became engaged to Alexander Mather, employee of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company.

The marriage was founded on mutual love and respect, and she and her husband proved to be, though opposites in temperament, yet complementary in their characteristics. Alexander Mather was cautious, careful, fearful of responsibility and super-scrupulous in all his dealings with any who employed him. Eliza was warm-hearted, excitable, and had an adventurous spirit. Both were blessed with strong moral natures, the great inheritance they handed on to their children.

Alexander Mather was soon appointed to a post at Fleetwood station, so, shortly after their marriage, the young couple moved to that interesting little town.

Fleetwood was a small seaside place on the

Lancashire coast, at that time little more than a sandy stretch with a small population, but boasting a good wharf from which the Belfast steamer had put out for forty years. On account of the Irish mail service and the local garrison, Fleetwood had two or three good hotels, but the local population was almost entirely seafaring.

Mr. and Mrs. Mather took a little house in Poulton Street. It contained a couple of bedrooms, a living-room and a scullery, all very plainly furnished, but it satisfied the simple standard of comfort of those who lived in it, and was the abode of peace, harmony and rectitude.

On the first Sunday Mr. and Mrs. Mather went to the Wesleyan Methodist Church, for the husband belonged to a family which, for conscience' sake, had come out of the Church of England and attached itself to Methodism. A few days later a member of the congregation who had seen them at the Sunday service called to welcome them to the town, and to the fellowship of the Christian community.

On the 9th of December 1884 the eldest child, Percy Cunningham, was born, and his arrival was made the opportunity of a visit to his father's people. The mother took the baby in her arms and went to her mother-in-law's house. For the first time the old lady looked into the face of her daughter-in-law, and what she read there pleased her so mightily that all her questionings

vanished ; she took the child from her and folded it in her own arms.

"Eliza," she said, "I'm fain to see you," then kissed her lovingly, and from that day a deep affection existed between Eliza Mather and her mother-in-law.

Percy Mather's childish eyes looked out on a world of entrancing interest. The shipping trade was brisk in those days and the tall-masted wind-jammers brought rich cargoes to Wyre Dock and landed crews who made the streets of Fleetwood re-echo to their lively songs. The fishing fleet sailed in and out with each tide, and pilots hurried down the river to board the sailing-vessels and bring them safely to port.

Little Percy learnt to live with his eyes out to sea and to give the correct name to every kind of craft that appeared on the horizon. He loved it all from the day when, at the age of two, he was first put into the jersey suit brought him as a present by his father, and felt so much at home in it that nothing would coax him back into petticoats again.

The family soon left the small house in Poulton Street for one in Albert Street, where a baby girl was born and named Edith. Later on there was another move, this time to Balmoral Terrace, where the youngest child, George, was born. It

seemed as though the family fortunes were on the up-grade, for Alexander Mather was offered the post of station-master near his old home at Brinscall. With great jubilation they all travelled down to inspect the place and the station-master's house in which they were to live. While parents discussed the arrangement of rooms the children were busy planning out their own little gardens, but when they got back to Fleetwood the father shook his head. A sudden nervousness had seized him as he thought of the responsibilities, and the post was declined.

Years later, in Central Asia, Percy Mather loved to talk of the holidays when, as a child, he had gone to friends and relatives in a small village near the Lancashire moors. Here the Mather children had the delight of playing with a large family of boys and girls whose mother was easily coaxed into making delicious pies of blackberries and blaeberries which the children picked among the bushes.

The old sheepdog, Tiger, joined them when they explored "the cutting" which was forbidden to the public and necessitated an alert child being appointed watchman, to give the sign if anyone came in sight.

Still more exciting were the visits to the "haunted" derelict country house where there was the thrill of seeing Tiger prick his ears and stand alert when he scented the approach of the ghost.

There was also Bertha, the donkey, a wily beast. The children spent hours rounding her up, but as soon as one climbed on her back she would canter a few paces and suddenly stand, skilfully landing her rider over her head. It is recorded that Percy kept his seat better than any of the others.

Each year in the autumn, a month was spent at Brampton with the Penfold cousins who lived two miles from a station. Old Joe, the bus-driver, pretended not to see that they took it in turn to act as conductor, riding on the step and politely opening the door for all passengers.

One summer holiday Percy came home the proud possessor of a violin which Mrs. Baxendale, mother of his playmates, had given him. The lad had a passion for music. He was gifted with a correct ear and great natural musical intelligence. Later on when he went to China this same violin went with him and was his companion through many hours of loneliness.

Among the boys of the town Percy was ring-leader. He was up to any kind of mischief, utterly fearless and had a lithe body, slim and wiry. He was quick of eye, thought and action. Diving and swimming came naturally to him and water was his element. As a runner he surpassed all his companions, and the story is still told of a certain football match in which he was to take part. He

arrived at the station just in time to see the train moving and the team waving at him through the windows. Without a moment's hesitation he took to the road, and the members of the team could scarcely believe their eyes when he trotted on to the field, in time to take part in the match.

Somewhat to his mother's distress he spent the evenings learning the art of boxing, and when he came home boasting of his prowess, she would say: "If it is exercise you are wanting, come and knead this dough for me." He, nothing loath, would knead the batch of bread with inexhaustible energy. One night he came home with a broken nose and his mother felt the time had come to suppress this passion for pugilism, but the father said: "Let him alone. It may stand him in good stead at some future time."

At outings, Sunday-school treats and all such expeditions, Percy Mather was to the fore. At an early age he caused alarm among the organisers of a picnic party by climbing the flag-staff in order to get a clear view of the prison exercise yard, over the high enclosure wall. He often went with parties of boys and girls to visit the Wyre lighthouse, two miles out to sea. Many a night he spent out of his bed with the pilots, either in their boats or rowing in the dinghy. He was so apt at seafaring that the pilots expected him to choose a sailor's life.

One of the glorious days of childhood was that on which he won an old bone-shaker in a raffle, for threepence. Within an hour he had his balance so well that he was riding it up and down the town, and it was a source of untold joy until the day when the rattletrap machine fell to bits after a collision with the bicycles of two girls who were on the wrong side of the road.

He was the recognised leader of a gang of boys ready for any fun, game or mischief. Percy was the captain and they were the trusty men who obeyed his instructions, yet if there were a job on hand requiring assistance they could be relied on for help, and the shoremen loved them in spite of their pranks.

But one day when a boat went aground and all were required to give a hand to haul her ashore, Percy's love of a game got the upper hand of him, and he skilfully nicked the rope, passing the word to his band as to what he had done. All pulled together but the boys had their eyes on him, for the order had been: "Be ready to run." There was a steady pull, snap went the rope, down fell the men and off flew the boys. It was some days before the Percy Mather team dared to proffer its services again, and it was well for him, that day, that he *was* "ready to run."

By the time Percy was thirteen years old he had

completed the curriculum required by the Board School. The law, however, demanded that he spend one year more in school—three terms spent in reviewing the last year's course. The man who, later on, was to prepare grammars and dictionaries in the Mongolian and Manchurian tongues, spent this precious year of childhood in going over back work. It was no doubt this lack of opportunity for advance that made him, at the age of fourteen, declare: "I am not going to waste any more time. I must now begin to earn my own living!"

A few days later he appeared at home in the uniform of a telegraph messenger, but his own unspeakable pride in the dress and in the post he had secured, found no response in the family circle.

His father's own intention had been to apprentice him to a watchmaker. At the age of ten he had taken him to Blackpool to have "his bumps told" by a phrenologist who offered advice to parents on the suitability of their children for any given career. The sage took a good look at Percy and doubtless noted the keenness of his eye and the alertness of his carriage, for after he had solemnly felt the shape of his head he turned to the father.

"Did you say your intention was to apprentice this lad to a watchmaker?" he asked. "Do nothing of the kind. The walls of a watchmaker's shop could never hold this boy. He will require the space of the world to move in. This youngster

will never be beaten at what he undertakes and he will always want to do a thing better than it was done before." Seldom has a phrenologist "told bumps" so correctly.

After spending some time in the telegraph service, Percy was promoted to hold a position under the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, where he was appointed clerk in the Left Luggage Office, truly a fascinating job to a boy of his temperament. Sometimes there was a crate of live chicks which he felt would be all the better for a run and a feed after long confinement, and this was followed by the excitement of chasing them all back into their cage. Sometimes the quiet station gave time for Percy and his fellow-clerk to do trick riding on passengers' bicycles. One day this game ended in disaster, for the platform barrier was unexpectedly shut, and as they raced along the foremost cycle dashed into it and got a bent wheel which cost Percy several weeks' pocket money to make good.

His daily work became more responsible when he took employment as clerk and book-keeper to a firm of decorators, but wherever he worked he gained the respect and approbation of his employers.

In 1903 he made the supreme decision of life, accepting Christ as Saviour and acknowledging Him as Lord. This happened at the time of some

special meetings conducted by the Rev. J. H. Doddrell, Minister of the Wesleyan Methodist Church at Fleetwood, and this definite step was the means of leading several of Percy's companions to do the same.

From this time, though he remained full of fun and boyish pranks, he diverted the thoughts and energies of the group, who recognised him as leader, to acts of more practical value. His parents had always known him to be a most reliable and conscientious child, and his companions were accustomed to reproof from him whenever their love of mischief led them too far, but now parents and companions alike realised that there was a new force moulding Percy's character. Many incidents have come to light showing the lad's kindness and care for the sick and poor. Where there was trouble he would call to see if he could be of help, and where sickness was combined with poverty he sometimes appeared with a basket of firewood and coal to make a fire in the invalid's room, for his father and mother were willing accomplices to his hidden acts of charity. Percy Mather's interpretation of Christianity was ever a practical one.

He continued at the Wesleyan Sunday School first as scholar then teacher, and later became local preacher on the circuit, being the youngest preacher on the list. Everyone expected Percy Mather to

enter the ministry, and indeed this was his own hope and intention, but before he could take the next step towards a ministerial training it was necessary that he should have preached in every chapel of the circuit and obtained a favourable report from each congregation. At the annual meeting when the church reports were read, all spoke highly of the young man, but it was found that, by an oversight, there were two centres which he had not visited. There was a good deal of protest at this negligence as his application was thereby delayed for another twelve months. The seemingly small event changed the whole course of Percy's life. He was waiting for a sign from God as to which of two paths he should take, and in the closing of the one he saw the opening of the other. Unknown to all he was conscious of an inner call to the foreign mission field, and it was greatly strengthened by this incident. His mind was directed towards China through his acquaintance with Mrs. Rhodes, whose son was a member of the China Inland Mission, and whose daughters, the Misses Lavinia and Narcissus, were interested in the Wesleyan Sunday School.

The first person to whom Percy spoke of his desire to be a missionary was his Sunday-school teacher, who gave serious attention to the matter, prayed with him and made a compact that they should both seek guidance on the next step of the

way. A little later he spoke to the minister, telling him that he was now confident he should go forward and apply to the China Inland Mission, and the minister urged him to speak without delay to his parents. Mrs. Mather was away from home and had to be informed by letter, so meanwhile he spoke to his sister Edith who was ever his confidante. She, startled at the thought of her brother daring to offer himself as a missionary candidate, could only answer :

“Whatever will they think of an application from a boy like you? What have you to offer them? You have neither the money, the education, nor the training that *they* will require.”

Edith was afraid that her mother would worry over Percy's letter so wrote off to her uncle, in whose house Mrs. Mather was staying, urging him to hold it back. “Percy wants to go as a missionary abroad,” she wrote, “but it would worry mother and undo all the good of her holiday.”

The uncle was a wise man. He did hold back the letter but only until such time as, in the course of conversation, he had led up to the subject and asked his sister-in-law what her own feelings would be if one of her children wished to become a missionary. There was no hesitation in her answer : “I should be most thankful,” she said, “provided that he were in earnest about it and that it were not

a passing whim." Hearing this he immediately gave her Percy's letter which she answered in her characteristic strong, simple and fearless way: "If you are fully convinced that you are doing the right thing you can count on father and me to do all in our power to help you"—and so they did.

Later on when parents and child talked the matter over together his mother told him plainly that she herself favoured the ministry: "If you should be ill," she said, "as a minister you would be looked after, and when old you would draw a pension."

"Mother," Percy answered, "have you not the faith of a grain of mustard seed? Have you ever seen one of God's children let down?"

One important matter, however, had to be decided before Percy Mather could take any step towards offering himself as a candidate to the China Inland Mission. It concerned his sister Edith and her possible training as a school-teacher. This caused a delay of three years, and it was not until 1908 that he was free to write to the Secretary:

"I desire to become a candidate for examination for foreign mission work. Will you kindly forward to me the fullest information in regard to the same. . . . You may think this is a hasty decision but it is not so. Some years ago I purposed in my heart

that if God opened the way for me my life would be devoted to service for Him on the mission field. It would take me a long time to tell you even the barest outline of the manner in which God has opened out the way. . . . Three years ago I was about to apply, but just then my sister was expecting the result of a scholarship examination. We had decided that if she passed, I should wait for two years and help to support her while she was in college. She passed and I waited. But I have not been idle . . . I have been teaching in the Sunday school regularly for five years. . . . I studied and passed the examination for local preaching . . . I also became a distributor of the Wesleyan Missionary Magazine, and in less than twelve months increased the circulation from forty to over two hundred. I delivered the papers personally each month until recently, when my little brother and my sister have assisted me."

On the 10th of March 1908 this first application went in, and three days later he wrote again thanking the Secretary for a prompt reply. One month later he was invited to London for a personal interview to which invitation he answered: "I should be glad if you will let me know what will be required of me while in London, where I shall stay and whether food, etc., will be provided, so that I may be prepared. . . . I find that I shall require

to take the boat and sail to London as I cannot well afford to pay the railway fare."

The days he spent with Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Broomhall at the Men's Training Home were intensely happy, and on his return to Fleetwood he wrote expressing his thanks for all their advice, kindness and help.

"I hope some day to repay the C.I.M. for the expense which I caused, but I can never repay you and Mrs. Broomhall for all your loving kindness. You have no idea what help and comfort I have received. I know that at present I am untrained but I hope to be able to get into the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow and then to offer myself again."

Percy Mather had expected that the Mission Board would require of him a general examination to test his suitability, but instead he was told that he must secure a course of training and Bible study such as the Glasgow B.T.I. offers to its students.

A year later he wrote cheerfully from Glasgow reporting the result of the second session examination: "My marks for this session are 97, 96, 98 and 95 per cent in the different subjects. The study has been both a pleasure and a blessing to me."

The period of training was indeed a very happy

one. Percy delighted in the opportunity for study, and in being allowed to witness for Christ as leader of the open-air meeting in the slums. He was popular with fellow-students and was ringleader in fun and mischief.

The questionnaires which the various Missionary Societies issue to their candidates always contain questions drawn up in such a way as to secure that the information supplied reveals a good deal more than the candidate is aware of telling. Percy Mather's replies are given with engaging simplicity.

"What is your motive in offering yourself for foreign missionary service?"

"The love of Christ constrains me. Ever since I was a child I have had a deep love and regard for foreign mission work. When I read the appeals for workers they seem to be calling to *me*. I have never attempted to stifle the call or to encourage it; but it has continued to grow louder and louder until now I am sure that God is calling me, and I am perfectly willing to go."

"Of the books you have read, name some which you most esteem."

"*Sesame and Lilies*. Southey's *Life of Nelson*. *Westward Ho!* *Sketches by Box*."

"Are you married, single or engaged to be married?"

"Single and perfectly free."

"Do you propose to bear, or contribute in any measure, towards the cost of your support in China?"

"No. I have nothing to give but myself. All my earnings have gone towards keeping up our home."

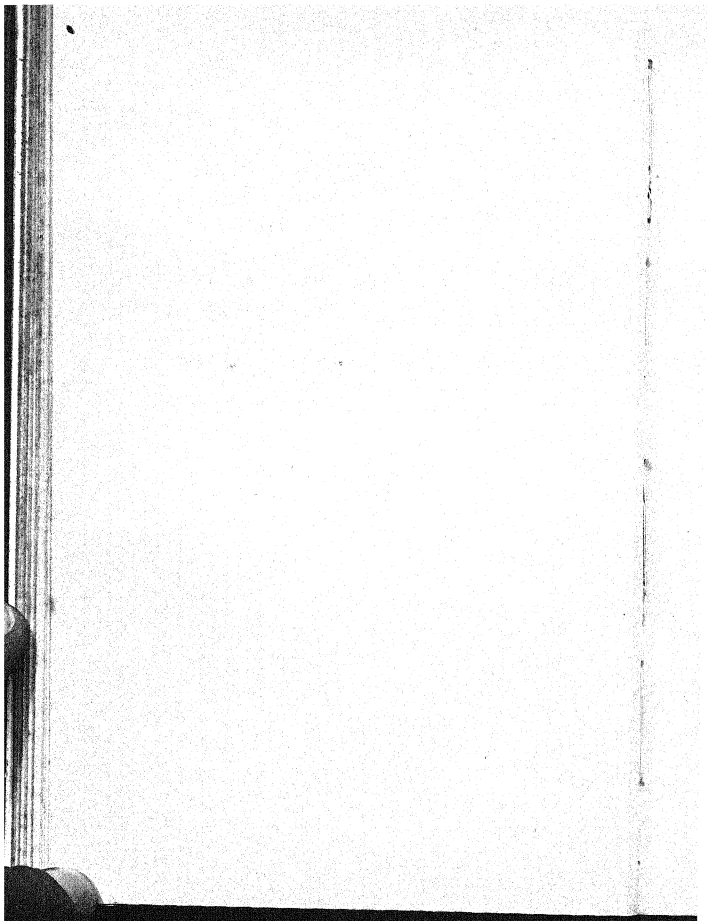
The necessary journeys between Fleetwood, Glasgow and London were usually taken by sea, and Percy Mather generally earned his passage as an able-bodied seaman. During the long summer vacation, in order not to be an expense at home, he signed on as member of the crew on a coasting steamer which plied between Fleetwood and Bristol. One Sunday the boat was held up at Bristol for the day and Percy made up his mind to hear the choral service at the Cathedral. Unfortunately his seaman's jersey was unwearable, so he replaced it with the only clean garment he had, which was a coloured shirt. It was not the conventional dress for a cathedral service, so he slipped quietly into the building and tried to hide himself among the pillars. The sight and the sounds entranced him, and his whole soul was rapt in the beauty of the service, when the voice of the verger broke in: "You can't stay here in that dress, young man."

The tone was peremptory and did not admit of discussion, so he obeyed and left the precincts of the consecrated building, though slowly, in

order to catch the last faint cadence of the glorious anthem.

He wandered back into the town not knowing where to go, but soon spied a small mission hall, where the warm-hearted congregation welcomed "the poor sailor lad"—as he laughingly called himself when telling the tale—clasped him by the hand and, finding him to be a true disciple, asked him for a word of witness which he gladly gave.

THE FASHIONING



THE FASHIONING

THE months sped by and in the autumn of 1910 Percy Mather was to sail for China. His passage was taken on the P. & O. S.S. *Namur* leaving London on September 10th. The night before sailing he wrote home :

September 9th, 1910.

“ We are just back from our last farewell meeting and it is nearly midnight. I am writing this in my bedroom, as I may not have time in the morning. We have had an extra busy week, and some splendid gatherings in large halls. One was held at the Mildmay Conference Hall and one at Spurgeon’s Tabernacle which has two galleries just like a large theatre. We are all just about ready for a rest. I have not even had a look round London.

“ I received your parcel this morning. Thank you for the things. They will do splendidly. I told you that I got my boxes through, in spite of overweight. Afterwards I wondered if I was doing right and came to the conclusion that I was not, so I weighed up the boxes myself, went round and paid up the excess. I can now leave England with a clear conscience.

"There was something I looked forward to buying which would have been useful to me but it took a lot of money to pay up the excess and I shall have to do without the other. Anyway the Lord will provide. I had a present of eight shillings from a man at the close of tonight's meeting. That will help a little."

In due time he reached Shanghai where he spent a few days on the China Inland Mission Compound in Woosung Road, after which, with other members of his party, he proceeded up the River Yangtse to Anking.

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"We have now left Shanghai for the Language School. On the last afternoon the barber came round and shaved us. He took my hair off in a straight line from ear to ear. Then we all changed into Chinese dress. The trousers have no pockets and the top is wide enough for two so they can be worn either side to front. One takes a big reef in front, wrapping it over, and ties the lot up with a broad canvas belt. Chinese shoes are so made that it does not matter which foot they go on. My coat is a long blue gown, with a black waistcoat worn outside and a little round black hat with a round bob on the top. My queue is fastened inside it. When we went in to supper in this rig I can tell you there was some laughter.

"After supper we packed up our things and

went down to the river steamer. We had already picked up a few Chinese phrases such as 'Kai Shui' (boiling water) and 'Hsi-lien-shui' (wash-face-water). These came in handy. Next morning a steward came round and said 'Chow-chow,' so we followed him to a table and had a basin of rice. After this we studied our Chinese primer and some Chinese passengers came round to help us. It was quite an interesting time.

"At one o'clock on Thursday morning we had our last meal on board and made ready to disembark. There is no wharf at Anking. The boat slows down and a junk comes alongside. The people swarm to the side when the junk comes along so as to be first aboard and we had a job to get off. Mr. Bland met us. He had been sleeping in a hut near the river. About six a.m. the city gates were opened and we entered the town. The country-side is covered with thousands and thousands of mounds. These are graves and they extend for over ten miles in one direction."

Percy had not been long at Anking before he was needed in his capacity as handyman. One of the students, a native of Finland, was taken seriously ill and had to be rushed to hospital for operation, and Percy was chosen as his escort. The nearest hospital was at Wuhu, which had to be reached by boat. The patient was carried to the river bank in

a chair swung on two poles. After waiting there four hours they had to board the steamer from a smaller boat in mid-stream, and he writes of the difficulty of getting the sick man aboard through the crowds of Chinese who tried to get ahead of them.

The strain of sleepless nights and the anxiety told heavily on Percy, for the operation turned out to be of a most serious nature and a few days later the patient died. On the day after the funeral, he wrote :

“Last night I slept at the hospital, or rather tried to sleep, but found it impossible as I have no mosquito netting and was lying on the floor. I was worried to death, so got up and wrote letters most of the night, killing mosquitoes by the dozen. At daybreak when I left the hospital it was pouring with rain and I had only thin clothing, so was soon wet through. Next day I went on a visit to the home of a Chinese Evangelist. After supper I went to bed. My head was awful so I dosed myself with quinine. I had a bad night, first sweating then shivering. All next day I was in bed and could eat nothing, but the evangelists' family have been extremely kind, and today I am able to get up and eat a little toast. Mrs. Yao has made me up a bed in a shady room and fastened mosquito netting all around. It was these insects that caused my fever. The night I slept in the

hospital I had twenty-five bites on one foot and twenty-seven on the other, not to speak of other parts of my body."

This was the first attack of malaria which he experienced. He never got the poison out of his blood, and even when he moved to the more healthy climate of the North-West he remained subject to attacks of fever.

In June 1911, he reached the town of Ningkwofu, in the Province of Anhwei, to which station he was appointed. From there he writes :

"Here I am at my station at last, after a most delightful sail with nice company on the way. I travelled with a young Scotsman about twenty-eight years old. The launch was about the size of our Fleetwood ferry-boat and packed with Chinese and their baggage. We left the mighty Yangtse in our rear and sailed away up one of its main tributaries, threading our way through thousands of Chinese boats nearly all of which had a family on board. Away we steamed past villages and towns and scattered farms, leaving them far behind. It is surprising to see the number of people living on these boats, besides all kinds of domestic animals and poultry. The hens have a string tied round their legs so that when they fall into the water they may be hauled back again.

The men and women on the boats work hard. Even when there is a fair wind they are never satisfied but keep on sculling to help the boat along. The native sailing-boats take three days to do the journey to Ningkwofu but it only took us eight hours. My fellow traveller says it is quite an act of faith to travel by steam-launch and I confess I had so little faith in the Chinese engineer that I gave the boiler a wide berth.

"In mid-July the heat here is almost intolerable and the mosquitoes are terrible. They bite our feet and pierce right through our clothing. We have to keep eggs well covered, for they even pierce the egg-shells, then the white of the egg turns brown and the egg goes bad.

"Three things are indispensable—an umbrella with extra covers, a mosquito netting and a fan. We sleep on bamboo matting and wear thin bamboo shirts to keep the gowns from sticking to our backs. We always take our fans to bed with us and fan ourselves to sleep. I only wish we could get decent water to drink. It is full of little live creatures and has to be boiled. There is always a sediment at the bottom of our cups.

"I am all alone in the station but I do not find it lonely as I have been very busy doctoring. I am getting quite a reputation as a cure-all. People come with all kinds of complaints and I have been very successful in dealing with sores and boils. On

Saturday night a Christian woman came with her little boy whose temperature was 105° . He had a bad swelling and I guessed it was blood-poisoning. I looked in all my medical books but none of them gave any advice on blood-poisoning so I was in a fix. I made a strong solution of disinfectant, washed the sore and dressed it with some ointment, and in the course of the next day the temperature began to fall and the child has done well.

"I had a fine time last night. After tea I was playing my mouth-organ when the Evangelist heard me and came along. I suggested a meeting and said *I* would play if *he* would sing. He was quite struck with the idea so we opened the little street chapel and about a dozen came in while the Evangelist sang hymns."

This is the first time that Percy Mather writes of that which became his constant habit—to play the mouth-organ, or the fiddle, and draw the crowds for others to preach to.

Every junior missionary leaving the Language School, launches forth into a difficult period. Behind him lie all the old safe props and the helpful associations; before him stretch the unknown conditions and the new adjustments.

Hitherto he has had specialised help with the Chinese tongue, and he has passed creditably the first of the six examinations required by the society.

His outfit of Chinese clothes, his bedding, his food basket, his Chinese Bible and hymn-book, are all brand new, and so is his deportment.

Percy and his fellow-students scattering to their first appointments, were still conscious of the tickle of their queues and the impediment on their movements caused by the long, narrow gown. They still used chopsticks a little awkwardly, and handled their tea-bowls otherwise than the native, who so easily brushes the floating tea-leaves away from his lips with the little china cover. The only things they carried which showed any sign of wear and tear were their English Bibles and the Chinese Primer, which they had been trying so hard to memorise during the past months.

All these things are but the outward and visible sign of an inward and mental distress. The pupil has left his teacher behind and notices immediately that the talk around him is different from that gentleman's slow and measured phrases. The lilt of tones which required so much pains on his part, first to hear and then to reproduce, is quite altered. When, summoning his courage, he calls aloud at the inn for a basin of wash-face-water and the barber, the attendant stares vacantly, but a kind bystander, just changing the tone by an infinitesimal degree says: "He wants wash-face-water and the barber," adding politely: "This gentleman probably comes from a very distant province."

Percy Mather's correspondence reveals how simply, how happily, how humanly, he faced the difficulties and embraced the opportunities of this period. His language was limited, but he owned a mouth-organ on which he was an expert performer, therefore the obvious thing was to attach himself to someone who could do the preaching after he, by his performance, had collected the crowd.

A young man exhorting his elders is more at a disadvantage in China than even elsewhere, but all the world over youth, simple, unaffected buoyant youth, is irresistible. Percy Mather was still young, and when the preaching was over he could play on the bank of the river, with the boys, until there gathered a crowd of adults watching his skill in throwing stones.

His mouth was unused to Chinese talk, but he could capture the heart of fellow-travellers on any river-boat by his talent in mimicking the calls of birds and the sounds of beasts, and every day he was winning his way by simple kindness and his instinctive quickness of response to need.

Extracts from his letters best tell the details of his life during this period :

January 1st, 1912.

"I did not sit up to watch the New Year in. I woke about 1 a.m. and sang quietly to myself: 'Come let us anew our journey pursue,' then

turned over and went to sleep again. In the morning the boys' school-teacher greeted me with the words, in English, 'A Happy New Year.' For breakfast we had rice, Nestle's milk, fried egg, brown bread and peanut butter. For dinner, scrambled eggs, fried bread, rice, carrot and rice pudding. Evening, tea, brown bread, boiled egg and rice pudding. After being in China for a few months, one is ashamed to look a hen in the face."

January 22nd, 1912.

"I am sailing along through beautiful country. Last night a messenger arrived to say that a Christian man had died twenty miles from here, so the Pastor and I decided to start off. We have a boat about half as big again as a Pilot's dinghy. There is no wind, but we are punting and getting along splendidly. It is not easy to write because we are rolling about so much. I had to stop here, because the punter gave an awful shout as the man with the boathook had seen a fish basking near the edge of the water. He caught it, and we hauled it in. Now we are going along fine. There are hundreds of boats on the river and all the men are busy catching fish. We arrived in time for an evening meal. In this house the walls and floors are of mud and the windows have paper instead of glass. There are no chairs, but just a few tressles and tables.

What the people lack in the way of goods they make up in kindness. In the middle of the room is the big coffin, painted red, and we had our meal quite close to it. After tea, the relatives and friends all assembled and we had service round the coffin. Then the Pastor and I climbed up a ladder to a loft, spread out our blankets on the floor and tried to sleep. The wind blew, the roof was pretty airy, and as we could see the stars we got a good share of the fresh air. At day-break we got up and dressed, then we had some tea, monkey nuts, and salted melon pips. The members of the man's family were all dressed from head to foot in coarse white cloth and we were each given a piece to put round our hats. I wondered whether to wear mine, but I remembered that our custom of wearing black is no less heathen than theirs of wearing white, so I put it on, not wishing to give offence. About nine o'clock all was ready, the bearers came in, and carried the coffin away, and we followed, the women weeping bitterly. We sang a hymn, and the heathen relatives fired crackers, specially at the turns of the road, so as to guide the spirit. The coffin was lowered into the grave, which was not more than two feet deep. Then we sang a hymn and prayed. Each took a handful of soil and threw it on the coffin. After the service we visited relatives who lived near, and partook of more tea and more melon pips. Then

I suggested returning home, but the people would not hear of it, and urged us to stay at least one more day."

February 12th, 1912.

"Home again from another journey. The man who carried my load last time promised to come again, but at the last moment sent word he could not come. Our gatekeeper found a man from north of the river, a farmer whose land was flooded and who was glad of an odd job. He was very poorly clad, and his appearance was not inviting, but he turned out to be a splendid coolie. It was a fine bright morning, and we set off together for the 25-mile walk. The first 6 miles we got over the ground quickly, crossing scores of small bridges, some of which were very shaky. After 6 miles we came to a roadside inn, where we had tea and peanuts. The sun was now well up and it was exceedingly hot. After a short rest we pressed on till we came to a broad river. The water was clear as crystal, and on the opposite bank was a typically Chinese town. There was no bridge, but a public ferry. We climbed a long flight of steps, passed through a narrow doorway and entered the main street. I had never seen such a narrow street in all my life before. It was crowded with people buying in for the Chinese New Year. We heard the beating of drums and cymbals with

most unearthly yells, and going to investigate found it was a travelling circus. We did not stop to patronise it, but crossed into a quieter part of the town, had dinner, and set off once again on our route. The road was very stony, and I was wearing a pair of Chinese cloth shoes, so it was very rough on the feet, and I began to feel the blisters rising. There was still another ten miles or more, so we had to press on. Over a shoulder of the hill I saw a whole fleet of Chinese fishermen in very small boats. They had from 200 to 300 cormorants with them, and they were driving them before them. The cormorants were diving away, bringing up any amount of fish. Later I saw the first water wheel since coming to China; it was used for grinding corn. After we passed through the town, we found a quiet place in front of the temple. I felt ready for a rest, and sat down on a large stone, but I had not been there two minutes before a young fellow from a house near by came running out with a chair and invited me to sit down. I soon had a crowd of sight-seers, so pulled out my mouth-organ and gave them a tune. Then preached and gave away tracts. Later on the road was very stony and I fairly 'ate some bitterness.' It was agony to walk; however it had to be done, so I set my teeth and hobbled along. We had to hurry, as the darkness comes on quickly here, and it is quite a

dangerous place as far as robbers are concerned. About 5 p.m. we climbed another hill, and all at once the little village down in the valley came in sight. A quarter of an hour later I was enjoying the warm welcome of a Christian Chinese family. I was tired and sore, yet happy. Perhaps you may think this is a hard rough life. Well, it is ; bad enough for us men, but the missionary women go through it all cheerfully and without a murmur. Many of them come from good homes, and yet they are content to rough it."

March 11th, 1912.

"I promised to tell you something of my last journey. It was a beautiful day, and the sun was very hot. After travelling five miles we stopped and had a cup of tea ; then I took out my fiddle and mouth-organ and soon had a good crowd. Five miles further on, as we passed a wayside inn, a boy came running out shouting my name. I saw it was one of our former schoolboys ; his father followed him, and they made me go in and drink tea with a couple of poached eggs and some pork. After a good meal I got out my musical instruments, one or two Christians gathered and we had a good hymn singing. Then I preached and talked to the people. We got once more under way to hilly country. Someone had been burning incense at a grave, and the grass had caught fire till the whole

of the hillside was ablaze. There were some thatched houses right in the track of the fire, so we set off to give a hand in putting it out. Next day we had a walk round. I threw a stone at some wild ducks and greatly astonished the Chinese by the distance I was able to throw. I was invited out to tea, but had not gone far before a boy brought me a stone and asked me to throw it for him. In a few minutes a crowd gathered and kept me busy throwing stones. Loud were the exclamations when I threw a specially high one. Once, when I went within a few inches of a big crow perched on a tree, I could hear them saying 'It is just like a gun.' I got up at 6 a.m. and had some breakfast, but after seeing the baker at work my appetite went down for his hands were all covered with sores. The way home was difficult; the road was baked hard by the sun, very rough and uneven. This poor weary missionary trudged on his way. His feet were blistered, and now and again as he banged his toe against a stone, or stepped on the edge of a rut, he ground his teeth to suppress a groan. The pain was awful, but he hobbled along as quickly as possible, and comforted himself with the thought that only another ten miles lay between him and home. How he longed for a gentle sea breeze. There was not a breath of wind, until, all at once, as if in answer to his longing, a most refreshing wind arose.

The missionary was holding an umbrella aloft to protect him from the burning sun. The wind came straight from behind, filled the umbrella and literally carried him along. For an hour and a half that breeze held out, and thus he was enabled to travel six miles in comparative comfort. The wind was fair all the way in spite of the bends in the road, and was just sufficiently strong to carry him along and take all the weight off his feet, yet not too strong, or it would have blown the umbrella inside out. 'Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.' I landed in Ningkwofu at 4 o'clock, hungry, tired, footsore but happy."

July 8th, 1912.

"My word, it is hot! The perspiration runs off me in streams. Still, I have the satisfaction of knowing that there is not a single mosquito in my room. A few months ago I made up my mind that I would have one room where I could retreat from their maddening stings, so I bought some wire netting, like that used for meat safes, and got a carpenter to make a window frame and a door, and fix it into my room. It cost me 15/-, but it was worth it. Here I am, sitting comfortably, while the beetles, mosquitoes and numerous other insects are banging their heads in fury at the wire while

I laugh at them, and feel like a piece of roast beef in a meat safe. I consider myself well off to have this harbour of refuge.

"Yesterday an old shop-keeper invited us in to a cup of tea and some cakes. He was an interesting old man. He asked me what was my honourable country, and later on we began talking about the evils of opium which he strongly condemned, attributing China's poverty to this drug. I agreed with all he said; then he asked whether in my honourable country we used the awful stuff. I smiled and said 'No.' He asked why, so I told him we considered it very harmful. Smiling in a nice bland way he gave me a terrible wipe: 'If in your honourable country the people do not take the stuff and consider it so harmful, why do they send it to my unworthy land to harm people here?' I was just about staggered. It was so unexpected that I did not know what to say, and I felt really ashamed. Fortunately F. came to the rescue, and put the blame on India and a few of the Englishmen there, but I tell you I felt small. You have no idea of the curse and blight that opium has brought to this country. So many of these people have been ruined by it. May God forgive us as a nation for our part in the cursed traffic."

August 8th, 1912.

"Last night was very hot and at 10.30 p.m. we got a couple of doors off their hinges and spread out our bedding on them. The people badly wanted to give us the use of their beds, but it was cooler where we were, and we were afraid to accept lest we might have to do some hunting in the night, as there are still some of China's millions here. Just before going to bed the old father came into the room to see if we were all right. I noticed my umbrella had fallen to the ground, so I picked it up, hung it on a nail, and jokingly said it would be handy if it rained in the night. They all laughed and assured me that the roof was all right. Presently the wind came up and there was a terrific storm. The house trembled, the roof was stripped, the lightning was incessant, and down came the rain like a cloudburst. F.'s bed was just under one place where the roof was stripped right off, so you can imagine the scene. A young water-spout came pouring down on his head. He just gave one howl and fled, taking refuge in another part of the house with other members of the family who had been washed out of *their* beds. And how did I fare? Well, I had a large piece of oilcloth in which I wrap my bedding; I took the precaution to have this handy, and as soon as things began to get lively I threw it over my bed, opened my

umbrella, and there I was, the rain pouring on to my bed but not wetting me. They shouted for me to come, and the old farmer begged me to join him in the next room, but I had more sense, and told them I would not get out until I was washed out. I knew if I left that bed for half-a-minute I should be soaking wet through, so there I was, huddled up under the umbrella, watching the lightning, the rain and the hailstones, and listening to the tiles smashing. It was awful, but my sides ached with laughing as I saw the others driven from their beds, paddling about in their bare feet on the muddy floor. The rain kept on for a long time, so I had to try and sleep and hold up my umbrella at the same time. I dozed off once or twice, but the umbrella fell and woke me up. People said they had never known such a storm before. One bamboo roof was blown nearly half-a-mile away from the house. The people laughed when I reminded them how handy my umbrella had been.

"I got up early and reached the top of the mountain pass by dinner time and had a cup of tea with an old Christian man who lives there. I thought I could be back about three, and still have time to get to our Chapel, which is in the valley. There were two high peaks which seemed to be connected but when I climbed the first I found they were separated by a deep ravine. How-

ever, I was determined to get to the top, and what a time I had, crawling along the edges of rocks, down steep precipices, forcing my way through grass ten feet high, breaking through thick creepers and wild vines, and crawling through forests of trees growing so close to one another as to be practically impassable in some places. I had to keep turning back to find fresh roads. I never had such a climb in my life, and I would not do it again for a pension. I called myself a fool many a time for attempting it, but the very difficulties made me determined to climb to the top, and I managed it. The view was magnificent—range upon range of mountains as far as the eye could see. However, I had no time to stay and admire. I just took out my little pocket testament, read and prayed and set off again. I had another hard struggle but managed to get back by sunset. The coolie who had carried my luggage was out looking for me. He had set out to accompany me, but turned back before we had gone half-an-hour, saying the road was too difficult. He and the old man were both very anxious. The only thing I feared was that I might stumble on a tiger's lair. As darkness came on, and we heard the animals calling to one another, I was glad to be safe and sound with the old man instead of spending the night on the mountains. Next day the villagers held theatricals. They had three idols placed on chairs in an open space, and the

people were burning incense before them, firing crackers, bowing and knocking their heads on the ground. There sat the horrid things with a sardonic grin and with a fixed stony stare. You have no idea how devilish it all seemed. It gripped my heart, and as the incense came wafting along it savoured of hell. I took out my fiddle, preached the gospel and distributed some tracts."

October 15th, 1912.

"As none of the schoolboys here have been to the great city of Wuhu, I thought I would take one along with me, so I settled on a fine little boy of 15. His name means 'Golden Glory.' I offered to pay his fare, but he has a few fields and some property of his own, so he declined my offer, and said he would pay himself. His gown was rather shabby, so we sent him to the tailor and ordered a new one. We left home at 9 a.m. and got into a little sailing boat, with 20 others, and a vast amount of baggage. Three men rowed the boat along, then a breeze sprang up so we went along in style. Later on we came to a bend in the river and encountered a head wind, so the three men went ashore and towed the boat. At 12.30 we sighted a steam launch and tumbled aboard. At one place we passed the body of a man floating in the water, but the boatmen took no notice of it. Sailing boats, too, passed close by, but did not offer to take the

body out of the water. While we were going through a narrow channel, a fine big fish jumped right aboard. One of the crew ran forward, caught it and flung it back into the water. I asked what he did it for and was told the man was afraid there was an evil spirit in the fish, as it was not a natural thing for it to do. When we reached Wuhu and I was looking after our things, Golden Glory was standing on a little flat-bottomed boat that was alongside the launch. I happened to turn round and noticed a man gently pushing it away. Golden Glory was standing there with a portmanteau in his hand and was not noticing. The man had got the bow clear and was coming aft when I spotted his game, and had just time to spring aboard, clutch another boat by the stern and haul the boat back. The man evidently intended making off with Golden Glory and the bag: Then he would push the boy into the water, or land him somewhere lower down. You have to keep your eyes open here. We found our way to the Mission Compound, but when 200 yards away from the door I heard a splash and saw little Glory disappear down a large open sewer. I ran back, jumped across on to the lower side, but it was so dark I could see nothing of him, but I could hear him struggling. I thought he must have been swept down underground. I was just going to take my things off when a man came along with a lamp, and

we saw little Glory trying to scramble out. I leaned over and helped him on to the bank. Poor little Glory! What a change. His new coat covered from head to foot with filth, the smell was abominable. It was enough to make the little chap cry. It was the first day he had worn that new gown, and his underclothes were quite new, but there was no sign of tears, he just kept saying to the people 'Puh-yao-chin' (it does not matter).

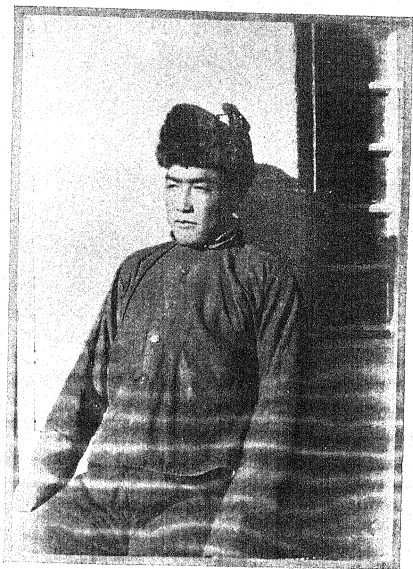
"At 10 p.m. we reached the compound, where the gatekeeper and his wife gave us a warm welcome. She is a fine little body, and nursed me when I was ill. She soon had some hot water ready. Glory took off all his clothes and had a bath, and was soon sweet and clean again. The little Chinese woman took his clothes, soaped them, scrubbed them, cleaned them, and next morning brought them round, fresh and clean as ever. The next day we spent most of our time watching the shipping. We went on board a cargo steamer and also a U.S.A. torpedo boat. The little boy was astonished at the size of these boats, and opened his eyes wide. He has never seen anything like it before. A gunner on the torpedo boat was very kind, showed us all round and explained things. We left again about 7 p.m. Had supper on board, sardines, bread and butter—they were really grand. How I enjoyed the trip, and I think one of the strangest things Glory saw was an American sailor with red hair!

"I like to study the faces of the Chinese people. One gets just the same types here as at home. Some are open, free and generous, others close, stingy and mean; others are bluff and hearty, some sullen or morose. Many remind me of the fishermen at home."

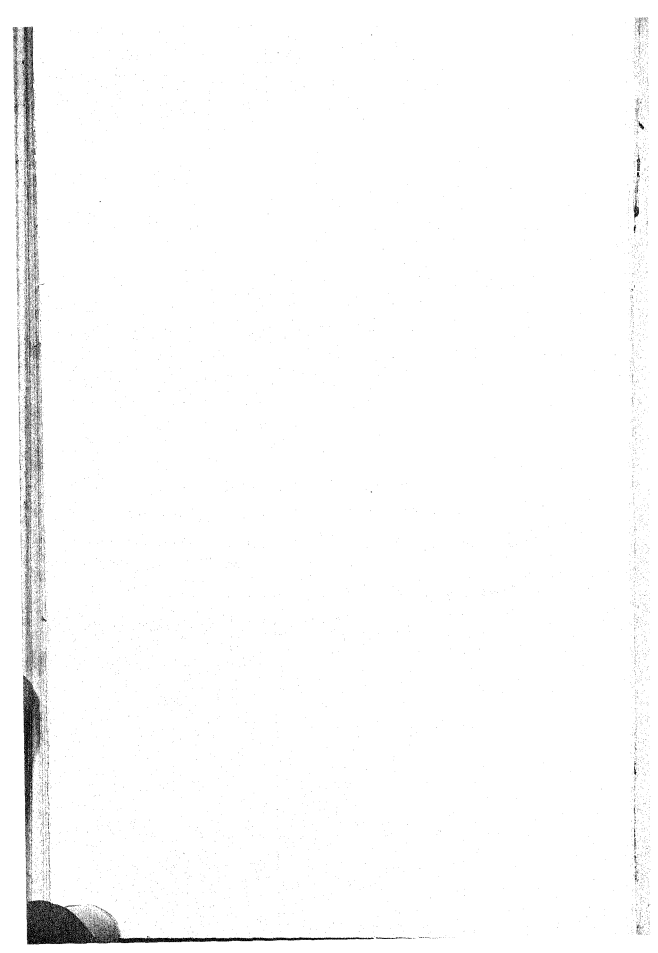
November 8th, 1912.

"Many thanks for the picture postcards of the Fleetwood docks and fishing boats. That one of the Mount struck by lightening was specially interesting. I knew every person in the picture. As to the photo of — I think he is supposed to be reading the Bible, but he has a cigarette stuck between his fingers, so I dare not show it to any of the Christians for they would soon spot that.

"Last night I was wakened up by F., asking if I had lodgers in bed. He said he could not get to sleep. His bed was swarming with bugs, and we killed at least 50, then made up a bed on some forms. Next morning we killed 20 more. There has been a big drop in the temperature since we set out. Friday and Saturday were like hot summer days. I was wearing a thin pair of cotton trousers and shirt. This morning I am wearing a suit of pyjamas, two pairs of trousers, two waistcoats, a woollen singlet, shirt, wadded jacket and a thick gown. I was cold on my last journey, so this time I came out fully prepared.



NIMGIR, THE FAITHFUL MONGOL SERVANT



"Thank you for the sweets. They were a real treat. I let some of the Chinese taste them, and they smacked their lips over them."

January 20th, 1913.

"I spent Monday night on the top of the high pointed mountain pass. It was bitterly cold, a heavy gale sprang up during the night, fairly made the little house quiver, and blew the straw thatch off the pigstye. It was quite amusing to hear the old man's remarks next morning: 'Venerable Heavenly Ruler, I think it is too bad of you to send a big wind like this. Here's the roof off my pigstye gone, after all the trouble I took to thatch it; how do you expect an old man like me to be able to thatch it again in this cold? If you wanted to change the weather, you might have sent a drop of rain instead of a gale of wind.'

"I did not intend to stay the night with the old man but thought of going on to a place called 'The Five-Arched Bridge.' When I got to the top of the pass, however, I found I had left my shaving mirror down in the village below. I suggested my coolie going back and fetching it, whilst I wrote my home letter, but he did not seem to be keen, so I set off on my own. I had walked about a quarter of a mile and descended a steep part of the mountain, when all at once I bethought me of some medicine I had promised one of the Christians.

He said he would call round for it before I left, but had evidently been hindered and I forgot to leave it for him. I looked back up the steep mountain path and did not like the thought of climbing back for a bit of medicine; however, I decided to do it for the Master's sake. When I got there I found the old mountaineer had come home, he was out when we first arrived. He asked me where I was going. I told him, and he at once volunteered, glad of the chance to earn a few cash. I was thankful that I had decided to return and get the medicine. The old man took it for me and brought back the mirror safely. So by climbing one quarter of a mile for Christ's sake I was saved a tramp of six miles."

February 11th, 1913.

"We are just getting over the effect of a heavy snowfall. It lasted all Friday and the snow piled itself up in great heaps. I went into F.'s room and saw he had several buckets and washhand basins on the floor catching the water which was running from the ceiling like a lot of taps. I climbed up into the loft to investigate and found three great heaps of snow, one over four feet high. I shouted F. up, and we soon had our jackets off and were busy clearing it away. It took us quite a long time. However, the leaking stopped and it would have taken days to run away had we not helped it."

April 21st, 1913.

"Here we are in Wuhu once again. I left Ningkwofu last Wednesday morning, and had a good trip down. The boatman was a very nice man, and we were quite a family party. Father, mother, a boy of about 16 years, and a little chap of nine. The latter was a proper little comic, as lively as a cricket and could manage the boat quite like an old hand. You would have laughed had you seen him, the back of his head shaved in a circle, quite clean, and the rest of the hair sticking out in bristles all round.

"At one place there were three goats standing on the bank. I gave a 'ba-a-a-a. . .' imitating a goat, and they all answered me back, wagging their tails. You should have seen the youngster; he nearly went wild with delight, and whenever he saw any more of the goats he begged me to do it again. Later on I made a little noise and told him I thought there was, perhaps, a kid under the flooring boards. He bent down and began to peep through the cracks and said 'Oh, yes, there is.' Of course he knew there was not, he was only pretending; then I asked him what colour it was, etc. He was very imaginative and gave me all kinds of details. All at once I gave a crow like a cock and you should have heard the kiddie; he fairly screamed with joy. Then he bent down again

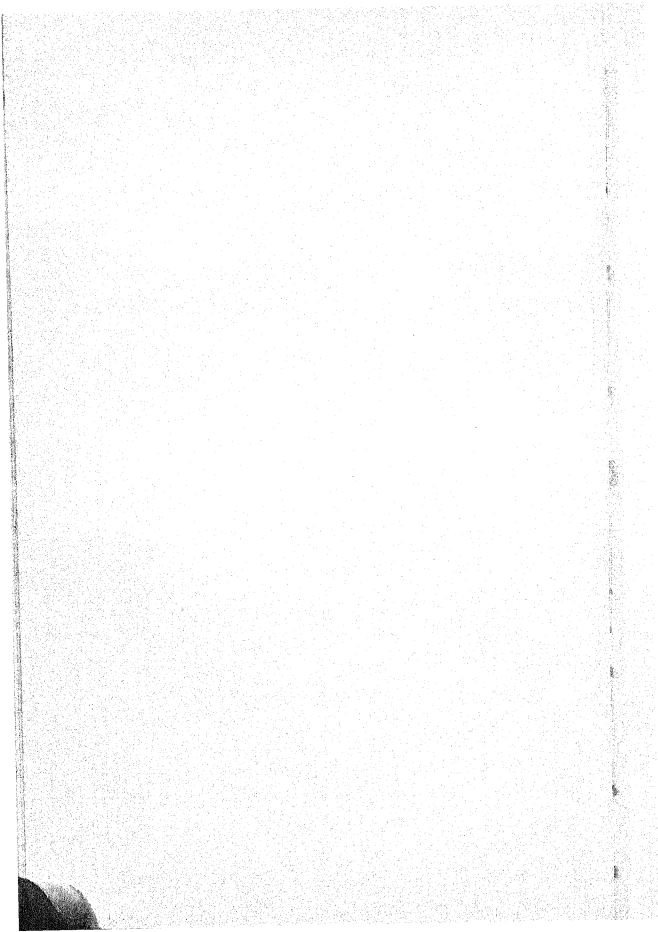
and said he could see the goats and cocks, pigs, and all sorts of things. All at once whilst he was bending down, I gave his leg a nip and barked like a dog. He fairly got a start, and could hardly believe but that it was real. Next he wanted to know what else I could imitate, and he kept me busy barking, ba-a-a-ing, braying, neighing, lowing and crowing until my throat was hoarse and the tears came into my eyes. Then I had a rest and showed them some of Father's tricks with string, 'threading the noose,' etc. I noticed a piece of stout twine and could see it was rotten, so showed them how I could break it with my hands. They thought I was terribly strong. Then the eldest boy passed me the halliards that are used for hoisting the mainsail, a stout rope about half-an-inch in diameter, and asked me if I could manage to break that. I said 'You just let me have a try.' The rope would be spoiled if it had a knot in it, and so he was afraid. However, he was a bit dubious, and thought I might be only bluffing, so passed it to me again. I wrapped it round my hands and said in a grave tone 'If it breaks you must not blame me.' At once he snatched it away, but passed me a short end of an old tow rope about 1" diameter and asked if I could break that. I said I was afraid that would be too thick; however, I pretended to try. The rope made a sharp noise and I pointed out a place

where one of the strands had been broken before. 'My word,' he said, 'you broken through one of the strands.'

"We had not much wind, but there was a good current, so the first day we made 25 miles. We fastened up at a little village along with a lot more craft. I did not bother to take any food but just had my meals with the boatman as one of the family. By the time tea was over it was quite dark. I thought I would go ashore and have a look round, so took my little Chinese chum with me to carry the lantern. The village was only a small one, but I went into one of the tea-shops and soon had quite a crowd of interested boatmen plying me with questions. Then I preached the gospel to them. At night the boatman and his wife hung up a curtain in the stern and slept there. I and my chums slept amid-ships and managed without curtains. The boat was only the size of a small pleasure boat, and if you sat up in bed you bumped your head on the ceiling. However, there were no B flats, F sharps, white elephants or Scotch greys. The boat was very clean and I had a good night's sleep."



THE CALL



THE CALL

WHILE Percy Mather was tramping the villages of Ningkwofu he had many opportunities for solitary reflection and uninterrupted thought. There were long walks among the mountains when he had time to think out to their logical conclusions certain suggestions which had been presented to his mind and had taken root. A tremendous challenge to the missionary body had recently been issued in the form of a book entitled *Missionary Methods—St. Paul's or Ours*, written by the Rev. Roland Allen, missionary in China of the S.P.G. That book set Percy Mather thinking thoughts which had never before occurred to him.

In accordance with the custom of his mission he was appointed to a "mission station" of which the activities had been excellently organised and were efficiently put into action by a group of fine people who were his fellow-workers. Indeed, he realised that to live and work with such men and women had afforded him the best training he could have had during his first years. There was any amount of work for them all to do, and for himself there was scope for more than he could hope to handle. The evangelisation of the

entire country, however, was the objective, and this book, revolutionary as it was in its implications, yet sound in the principles it enunciated, suggested a practical basis by means of which that evangelisation could become a working possibility and be effected within a reasonable period.

The volume reached him at a crucial hour and he immediately brought himself into line with some of its minor suggestions. From this time he steadfastly refused the title of Muhshī or Pastor (the title adopted by most of the men missionaries of the China Inland Mission), and insisted on being addressed as "Mr. Ma" without any prefix to indicate his standing. It was a small thing in itself, but it indicated the point of view that the title of pastor should be reserved for the man chosen, by the Chinese Church, to hold the pastoral office, and it helped to define the relationship which from this time he adopted towards Chinese colleagues. For the remainder of his missionary life he was adamant on the point, and shortly before his death the writers heard him smilingly but quite decisively, correct a member of the preaching band to which they belonged, saying: "I am not a pastor and must not be so addressed."

One of his Ningkwofu fellow-workers writes: "He took his full share in station activities, both in the city and in the country, near and far off, but on principle he always preferred to give place

to the Chinese leaders, in conducting meetings and in other ways. At that time Roland Allen's book *Paul's Methods or Ours* was being widely read and discussed, and it was from Mr. Mather that I first heard of it. In the light of its arguments and his own personal convictions, we discussed our local methods. We did not always agree but there was no bitterness in controversy."

His was a temperament which exacted of him immediate and consistent action, and discussion only appeared to him serviceable as it answered the purpose of clarifying thought. At this same period he was eagerly reading every journal which came from the pen of the pioneer missionary George Hunter, also of the China Inland Mission, who was working alone in distant Chinese Turkestan. "Paul's Methods" of evangelism suddenly connected in his mind with George Hunter's far-flung missionary journeys.

A thought invaded his mind which resulted in two letters being written. One was addressed to Mr. Hunter and the other to Mr. Hoste, General Director of the C.I.M. George Hunter was a cautious Scot and naturally somewhat fearful lest some young enthusiast with a passing desire for adventure should be offering to join him in his difficult work and later prove a hindrance and responsibility rather than a help. Supposing, for example, he should desire to introduce into the

hard, exacting conditions of that life the luxury of family ties. Mr. Hunter knew the demands of the pioneering job through and through, so he wrote the honest straight letter which the veteran owes to the recruit, hiding nothing from him of the hardness of the task. Two decades later Mather's own judgment confirmed all that Mr. Hunter had said, and when, on his one and only furlough, kind friends took upon themselves to suggest that his loneliness might be mitigated by the companionship of a wife, his comment to his own mother was: "Mother, I would never do any woman the wrong of taking her as wife into such conditions as exist in Central Asia."

The second letter, addressed to Mr. Hoste, contained an offer of service for Turkestan and asked leave to join Mr. Hunter in pioneer work, declaring that he believed himself to be commissioned of God to do so. Meanwhile to his fellow-workers he said never a word, but went on quietly and steadily tramping the villages as though that were to be his life-work.

Let no one think that such a step as Percy Mather was contemplating can be taken without terrific conflict at every turn. He was counting the cost and realising all that he must renounce. His present life was a hard one, that would be harder still. In Anhwei he had limited companionship, in Turkestan he would have the fellowship of one

fellow-countryman only. What if they proved to be incompatible? Whatever happened there could be no return. What if he proved unfit for pioneering and became a burden to the man he wanted to help? For months he had been testing himself in secret, voluntary disciplines, taking long tramps, eating poor food, denying himself even legitimate comforts. The need of guidance was so vital that he dared not consult with flesh and blood, but later he confessed to long, weary, sleepless nights during which he faced all that the future might hold.

Three days before Christmas he was out on an itineration and wrote to his sister from the villages.

December 22nd, 1913.

"We are getting near Christmas and I have still a long way to go. It has been good weather so far, but I don't know what it will be like when I get to the mountains. The range is covered with snow, so the rivers may be swollen. If I can't get through I shall just turn back to the village and have a quiet time there. Somehow I feel this would be preferable. I want to get alone with God for a season and face the future. I have no doubts or fears, but I want to be sure that everything is in accordance with His Will. I had not

received a reply from Mr. Hoste to my letter, when I left home."

He was still out on that Christmas trip when the answer came, and it took the form of a telegram bringing him leave from headquarters to proceed to Turkestan as soon as he could conveniently make arrangements. The telegram was, of course, decoded and read by his fellow-workers, one of whom writes: "The telegram was the first we knew of his offer to join Mr. Hunter in Turkestan, and we all experienced more or less of a shock. It found him away among the mountains to the south of Ningkwofu."

Meanwhile Percy Mather, knowing nothing of Mr. Hoste's decision, was writing to his sister from that mountainous district:

December 29th, 1913.

"On the road once again. I spent Christmas Eve with a Christian family. They all went early to bed, but I sat up and thought about home and friends. I sang carols to myself and wished myself a Merry Christmas. On Christmas Day it was clear and bright. I had breakfast, said goodbye and set off for the mountains. I passed a little village about midday, and thought I would have my dinner in the midst of the beautiful scenery, but the only thing I could get in the way of eatables

was some Chinese toffee made of oil seeds and sugar, so I bought some and crunched it as I went. It is impossible to describe how magnificent the scenery was, but somehow that did not appease my hunger, and, as the coolie was hungry too, we said grace and sat down to demolish more toffee. It did not take very much to satisfy me, and even make me wish I had eaten less. We rested for a while on a footpath about 18 inches wide, the rocks going straight down to the river. All at once the valley rang with the sound of Chinese bagpipes, and coming towards us was a wedding party, all decked out in their best, waving silk banners and firing crackers. We scrambled down a steep pass to a dark valley into some parts of which the sun scarcely ever shines. I went to the house of a Christian, a bamboo hut thatched with straw, very humble, but we got a warm welcome and were soon enjoying a good tea. The father had just shot a wild boar, so we had quite a feast, wild boar with turnips and cabbage all boiled together. It was placed over a little charcoal fire, and while it boiled and bubbled we sat round with our basins of rice, dived with chopsticks into the pot and fished out bits of cabbage and turnip—only half-cooked, nice and crispy. Sometimes I fished up a dainty bit of fat pork, and with a bow passed it on to my neighbour. It was quite polite and very convenient. In the evening some of the Christians

gathered round, and we had a happy time with the Bible. I have walked over 100 miles the last few days and shall do 150 before I get in. Next day our dinner consisted again of Chinese toffee left over from the day before, with the addition of a little dough fried in oil. By that time we were right in the heart of our Switzerland, grand, majestic, lonely and awesome."

His fellow-worker continues: "It took a little time to locate him, but a day or two after receiving the message, he was back in the city and one day later was ready to leave. Only then we discovered that his preparations were practically complete, that his room had been stripped and that his things were packed. He only allowed himself a very light load. The rest of his belongings he had put into two trunks of which he handed me the keys almost at the last moment, with instructions as to contents. When I came to carry them out I found that the trunk he had kept in view of furlough was almost empty; the other, which he left for his fellow workers, was full of useful things. He would have liked to have slipped away out of the back gate, but was prevailed upon to accept a little of the honour the Chinese longed to shower on him. He took a parting cup of tea but resolutely refused a feast. He left in heavy rain on that long trek, which took five months from city to city. He went out through Jade Gate and

sent us a faithful record of the long journey. He has been as faithful in correspondence as he was in other things."

Hankow.

January 18th, 1914.

"I have told you but little of my departure from Ningkwofu. It was something of a shock to the Christians as I had not told them anything about it, feeling that three months would probably elapse before anything definite was done. They wanted to keep me for a feast, but I declined.

"I have reduced my goods to one cabin trunk, two tiny tin boxes and a bundle of bedding. Of course I have taken my fiddle. I left Ningkwofu about 10 a.m. with a 25-mile walk before me. I sent a man ahead with my things on a barrow. Presently rain came on. The roads were in a shocking condition so I took off my cloth shoes, bought a pair of straw sandals, tucked up my gown and set off to overtake the barrow man. Three miles further on I found him, sheltering in a little wayside inn. He said he could not go ahead unless I engaged someone else to help him by pulling the barrow. This could not be done for love or money. There was a stiff North-West wind, cold and threatening snow, so I had to pull the barrow myself. Sometimes the barrow man was rolling in the mud, sometimes I was; other times both

of us down together, for the barrow kept capsizing. It was a mercy it did not roll down the embankment into the ditch. After pulling for three miles, we reached a busy little village. Just as we arrived the wheel of the barrow failed to jump one of the stone steps leading to the bridge, so I was brought up suddenly and twisted round. Away went my umbrella inside out and torn to shreds, absolutely ruined, so I had to throw it away. After resting awhile, we managed to engage another man. However, the wind was so bad, I still had to give help. At 6 o'clock it was quite dark, and we had to sit in our wet things and wait for the moon to rise. The last three miles were cruel. The roads were hilly and we had to pull that barrow through mud trenches. I wore out three pairs of straw sandals. We arrived about 8 o'clock, tired, wet and muddy. However, it was all for the best because that night I was asleep the moment my head touched the pillow, whereas for nights before I had very little sleep—my mind being too active. By 3.15 we were sailing west up the mighty waters of the Yangtse. It was like old times to see shipping once again. The steamer was crowded with Chinese. I noticed three foreigners on the upper deck but I do not know whether they saw me or not. All cabins were engaged, so I had to plank my box in the saloon along with a lot of Chinese passengers' luggage. Soon they gathered round me and,

thinking I did not understand Chinese, talked pidgin English. They were greatly astonished when I spoke in their own language. One evening a Chinese brought out a gramophone, with Chinese records, a man imitating cows, sheep, a dog and birds. I was wishing the thing would stop when a young fellow put on a selection by an English brass band—Oh, it was fine to hear it! the first for three years. Everyone was looking my way, and as soon as they saw my smile, they broke into a roar of laughter. I got up from my seat, bowed, and thanked them for the honour.

“We were due to pass Anking at midnight and as some of the passengers were leaving and might get hold of my boxes by mistake, I had to sleep like the British lion in the song ‘He sleeps, with but one eyelid shut.’ At Kiukiang I saw some smoke in the distance, which looked like that from an engine. Sure enough up came an engine with half-a-dozen carriages, the first I have seen for three years. I forgot to tell you how I washed my trousers after the mud experience—I trailed them after the boat going down to Wuhu.

“I expect to leave for Honan to-morrow, two days’ train journey. From Honan I take cart to Sian, a little over a week’s journey. There I hope to catch up K. and together we go to Lanchow, then I expect to go with M. to Urumchi. How long that journey will take I don’t know.”

Sianfu.

February 2nd, 1914.

"I am now travelling in a little covered cart something like a tiny laundry cart drawn by two mules. The first three days the road was all gulleys from 10 to 70 feet deep. The country here is very different from the South. It is of a cementy brown colour with hardly a vestige of green. Dust lies on the road up to a foot deep, so we go trotting along simply covered with it and should a breeze spring up the conditions are awful. However, it is fine bracing air, and a cloudless blue sky.

"It is much healthier here than in the South. I'm as hungry as a hunter, and can eat like a horse. There is comparatively little rice grown and one of the staple foods is steamed bread, made from wheat which I like very much indeed. The inns are indescribable. The beds are of mud, have fires inside and are sometimes very lively. However, the women missionaries bear it all, so I must not complain. The roads are fearfully bumpy and one gets tossed up and down and thrown about in a most alarming manner, however, we pad the cart well with bedding and so reduce the shocks. The driver likes to start early in the morning, anything from 1.0 a.m. to 6.0 a.m. according to the length of the stage. I was let down lightly

as our cart was travelling without company, and the driver was afraid to leave too early for fear of robbers. So 4.0 a.m. was our earliest start and 6.30 a.m. our latest. When we first entered a gully I wondered why the cart did not upset, the shaking and bumping was so terrific. I looked out and found it was impossible for us to overturn as the gully was only the width of the cart.

“The other day I bought nice carrots, and when evening came I looked forward to a feast. The innkeeper promised to boil them nice and soft. In a few minutes he brought them back chopped up but had only scalded them, so I asked if he would mind boiling them for fifteen minutes. Soon he produced them again, this time just soaking with vinegar!!! I made an attempt to eat them but had to give it up. Another night I had dough cut up into strips and boiled in water without salt. You just try it. However, I sent my driver out scouting and he brought back five hard-boiled eggs which I mixed with the dough, and polished off the lot in fine style. The other day I found a man making some nice little dough cakes with treacle inside. Just a bit bigger than an Eccles cake. He was taking them out of the oven, and they did smell champion. I ate nine of them as well as three boiled eggs and some monkey nuts for dinner.”

Tsinchow, Kansu.

February 15th, 1914.

"We are spending Sunday at a Mission Station, and though it cost us a 36-mile walk it was well worth it. If we had ridden it would have taken us two days, and we could not have been here for Sunday, but the drivers agreed that if we would walk the mules could do a double stage, so yesterday the drivers called us at 12.20 a.m. Day did not break until 6.30, and we had five hours' travelling by moonlight over rough mountain roads. I *was* tired, trudging and struggling to keep my eyes open, but mules never seem to need any sleep. When we came to a village where we could get food we gobbled it down and started off to catch them up again. The Missionaries here have just lost their baby girl. She died yesterday morning from whooping cough. We took the body to the cemetery this afternoon and I see they have another baby boy buried there."

February 22nd, 1914.

"We have made slow progress this week, being delayed by snow and frost. Our longest journey was 27 miles and our shortest 10, but that ten was done in the teeth of a snowstorm. I had on a pair of strong boots, with large Chinese nails in them. K. had sent his boots ahead and only had

Chinese cotton shoes, so found it hard to stick to the road. Once he fell on the edge of a cliff—another foot to the left and he would have been over. The mules were falling continually; if we rode them we sometimes found they were within 6 inches of the cliff, and we were looking down precipices, from 10 to 70 feet deep.

“We met some men and boys carrying huge pieces of meat on poles. We could not make out what kind of flesh it was, but were told it was camel. That morning two camels had fallen over the cliffs and one was killed.

“One of the mules was carrying K.’s bedding and two cases of paraffin. On a bridge it missed its footing and fell into the water. The load got across its neck and kept its head under until with a mighty effort it reached the bank, leaving the load in the river. One of the men rescued the bedding which was soaking wet and a terrible weight. We wrung it out as best we could and have been trying to dry it each day since.”

Lanchow.

March 1st, 1914.

“I am enjoying one of the happiest week-ends I have ever had, with Mr. and Mrs. A., real Lancashire people, bright, warm-hearted, cheery Christians. Their married son, George, is here and his wife and little boy, also their daughter and

her husband. George came out to meet us, bringing a note of welcome from his father. I tell you it was worth coming for that welcome and the singing has been glorious, like a foretaste of heaven.

"I have received a telegram from Mr. Hunter at Urumchi: 'Hearty welcome.' Now good-bye to all foreigners until I see Mr. Hunter in August. The journey is long, difficult and dangerous, but from all accounts Urumchi is a splendid place when one gets there. We are taking over 5,000 Gospels with us."

Kanchow.

March 22nd, 1914.

"I feel more and more that I did right in leaving Anhwei for, great as the need is in 'Dark Anhwei' as it is called, yet it is nothing compared with Kansu and Turkestan, and I feel I must be where the need is greatest and the work hardest. Not only is it my desire (I dare not follow that alone) but I feel absolutely certain that God has called me, and that I am in a line with His will.

"M. is splendid company. He is very lively and we are having some grand times together. He has a very free and easy way with the Chinese. Sometimes when the innkeeper thinks to charge us an exorbitant price M. will get hold of his hand quite seriously and say, 'Here, old man, just let me feel

your pulse.' Having held it a minute he will look the man up and down quite seriously and then say, 'Do you know you're suffering from a serious disease?' The man begins to look alarmed and says, 'No; what's the matter with me?' Then M. says solemnly, 'Why, man, you've got a *tan-hsin* (covetous heart).' Then the man sees the joke and laughs just as heartily as we do. While the man is still laughing M. whispers in his ear, saying, 'I tell you what, old man, I'll give you so much,' mentioning a price which is just the other extreme, and the poor innkeeper holds up his hands in horror at the thought of it, then M. climbs up in price and the old man climbs down, and so they strike the happy medium. M. then gives him a few claps on the back and says, 'Never mind, cheer up, that heart of yours will be all right if I come round here a few more times.' So they part the best of friends."

"*Get back-to-your-Luck Inn,*"

Suchow.

April 5th, 1914.

"The last place I wrote from was Kaotai, where we were held up by a bad dust-storm. Saturday afternoon it cleared a little, so we made tracks for the main street. I got out my fiddle, and in less than five minutes we had a crowd of two or three hundred. They came running up

from all directions, and you have no idea how they liked it. When I was playing they were so quiet, and their faces beamed all over. When I stopped they called out 'Fine, fine—play again, play again.' Then we preached the Gospel, and after two hours began to sell, and were at it for an hour as hard as ever we could go to supply the demand for gospels. Later we thought we would call on the Catholic priest. He was a Belgian, about 36 years old, but wearing a beard and moustache which made him look nearer 50. He was unable to speak English, so we all conversed in Chinese. He asked if we would come and have tea with him on Sunday afternoon. We were out again preaching and singing hymns when his servant came to invite us to the house. We had a fine meal, a Chinese feast, about 20 dishes, and after tea he gave us chocolate, marked 'Army and Navy Stores'—it was delicious. Then we prepared to go back to our Inn, but he saw my fiddle, and said he would like to hear a tune before we left. We had a hymn-book and, although he could not speak English, he could read and sang in a nice soft baritone voice. How we all enjoyed it."

Three Streams Oasis.

April 12th, 1914.

"A few minutes ago I happened to pick up a

little calendar belonging to M. and noticed that today is Easter Sunday. It is about 8.0 a.m. in England and you'll perhaps just be having breakfast. I can hear a drove of camels going past our door, I hear the bells on their necks tinkling. How I'd like to be with you all once again for a few days to see for myself how you are getting on. I am keeping very well indeed and looking forward with joy to joining Mr. Hunter."

Ansichow.

April 19th, 1914.

"We are enjoying a week-end in the City of Peace. I have just overhauled all my belongings as one of our carts came to grief in a river we had to cross two miles outside the East Gate. The animals, instead of crossing, turned downstream and were carried along into a deep muddy hole. The wheels stuck and but for the prompt action of one of the men, who jumped into the water and cut the animals free, the shaft horse would have been drowned. I looked after the beasts while the others set to work to get the cart out. They removed the body of the cart from the axle-tree and carried it ashore. The wheels were still stuck so firmly that they had to take one wheel off the axle and use the axle itself as a lever to get out the other wheel. Two of the mules had swallowed a lot of water and looked a bit seedy but they have

recovered. We got the blacksmith to put some iron bands round the strained cart shafts, so we are now all right to move on again.

"We have just had the unexpected pleasure of meeting a famous explorer, Sir Aurel Stein. He is staying in a temple outside the West Gate and, hearing that two foreigners had arrived, sent his servant to ask us to call. He received us in his tent, where an Indian servant served us with tea and little currant cakes, and then he asked us to join him for dinner.

"Seven o'clock found us all seated round the table, Sir Aurel very smartly dressed, we two in our Chinese get-up. Menu: Carrot Soup, Fried Potatoes, Meat Balls, Custard Pudding, Stewed Apricots, Currant Buns. We drank soda water made from sparklets. Just before we left the inn his man came round to borrow what few knives, forks, spoons and enamel plates we possess. It was fascinating to hear Sir Aurel talk; he has surveyed the mountains of this area, some of which are 20,000 feet high."

One more week of travel brought Percy Mather and his companion to the Kansu-Sinkiang* border. Here they entered the province on which Mather's interest was so vitally centred and to which he knew himself called, for at each step of the way

* Sinkiang—Chinese name for Chinese Turkestan.

the conviction grew that he was in the line of God's will.

One day, in the exultation of spirit known only to those who abandon themselves to the will of God, he wrote: "The Lord plucked me out of Anhwei and brought me to the far North-West." He knew full well that he was putting his hand to a hard and exacting task which it would require every ounce of his strength to handle.

If Percy Mather had ever been under the impression that any two men, for no other reason than that they were both missionaries, could always live happily together, he must, after several years of life on the mission field, have discovered that such was not the case. He was now travelling forward to meet a man whose companion he had volunteered to be, for George Hunter had never asked for a fellow-worker. During that journey Percy Mather realised that he might have to face what would be worse than loneliness, for he was a sensitive soul and would have been quick to see if his way of helping failed to meet the need. Hunter was a man with the characteristics of a pioneer, one who could endure loneliness, who was inured to a hard and comfortless life, whose passion for reaching primitive people in remote localities urged him to ceaseless effort in spreading the knowledge of the Gospel. The journals he wrote revealed him as a tireless traveller in the service of

his Master. Such men cannot have adaptable and pliant personalities, bending to the views of others, or a genius for easy friendships.

Two strong men were going to meet and the result of their meeting was not yet to be predicted. The elder was in the thick of his job, and any companionship which could be of value to him must come in the form of help, and that help must be offered unobtrusively without adding anything to his burden. If all turned out well the two could accomplish much more than the double of what one had done; if otherwise George Hunter would be less well off than when alone, for there is more wear from friction than from work.

For all these reasons in answering Percy Mather's first letter, Hunter had stated plainly that whoever would be missionary in Sinkiang must be prepared to banish all thought of comfort and of home from his mind, and Mather had seriously and deliberately accepted these conditions. But all was well, for as Percy Mather knew, God had verily "plucked him out of Anhwei" and brought him to the place of His appointment, so, when the two men met, they fitted as those fit whom God has prepared for each other. Moreover, the pioneer instinct became more acute in Mather as he looked out across the spaces and realised that here was virgin soil where he was free to move and preach at will,

without infringing on his neighbour's rights or being halted by his landmark.

When Mr. Hunter, in Urumchi, heard that the two travellers had started on the long last lap of the journey, he determined also to trek out and come southwards, arranging his dates to meet them in Hami which is a large oasis town of the Gobi desert. As they travelled back together Hunter and Mather learnt to know and appreciate one another, and, all through the years that followed, the younger man felt towards the elder as a son to a father, while the elder came to rely upon his companion for every kind of help, to share every difficulty with him and so to trust his judgment that all plans were talked over freely between them. An onlooker could but say that this unity of mind, as well as of purpose was a great achievement, for neither man was naturally yielding, and each needed scope and room to move in. The restrictions of mission-station life were irksome to them both and they gloried in a spacious job where the rules of communal life were subservient to the main issue and in which no time was wasted on conventionalities. After they met Percy Mather wrote as follows :

Cart-wheel Oasis.

May 13th, 1914.

"I never yet had time to tell you about Mr. Hunter. The more I see of him the better I like

him. His home is in Scotland, at a little place just outside Aberdeen. He belonged to the Scotch Kirk, but went to Canada and associated himself with the Canadian Methodists. He has been in China about 25 years and now, like myself, belongs to no special denomination. He is very tall and well built, with dark grey whiskers. He has not had a furlough for over 13 years. He looked tired and worn when we first met him, but has brightened up wonderfully since then. He keeps saying : ' Oh ! but it *is* grand to have you young folks here. It does my heart good just to see you and hear you talking.' Dear old man, I've taken him to my heart and feel as though I had two fathers now. It is a great privilege, joy and honour to be with him.

"He is a great traveller and has been all over Sinkiang province and to the north of India at the foot of the Karakoram Pass. On one of his journeys he got west along the Siberian Railway line, to within four days' train journey of London, so do not be surprised if you see me turning up on horseback one of these fine days.

"I have just been asking Mr. Hunter where he got to. He says over the Ural Mountains into Europe and within a few hours' train journey of Moscow.

"On my way up I often wondered whether Mr. Hunter was able to sing or not. I asked one or two people but no one seemed to know. At

Ningkwofu F. could not sing at all, but used to try, thinking it might help him with his Chinese, and I suffered in silence. Seeing that there were only to be two of us up here, you will understand why I was anxious to hear whether Mr. Hunter could sing. I am delighted to find that he sings very nicely indeed. He has not a strong voice, but it is very sweet and true, and he can take bass and tenor parts. He tells me he has a little baby organ and that I may practise whenever I like, so if you have any cheap 'First Lesson Book' for 'Beginners on the Organ,' you might send me a copy by post."

Chih-kiob-ching.

May 15th, 1914.

"We arrived here a few hours ago, just in time to escape a heavy dust storm. The dust is driving along like a thick fog followed by a gale of wind. We have no windows nor doors to our inn so everything is just thick with sand. We are still in the Gobi Desert. I thought we should be out of it when we left Hami but we have a few more days before we are done with it.

"We left Hami last Monday morning. It was a glorious day. On our left stretched the Gobi Desert while on our right was the high range of the 'Heavenly Mountains.' The road was mostly gravel, sand and stones, and about every twenty miles we came to a beautiful little oasis, a stream of melted

snow having run down a channel dug by some farmer to a little plot of land. The green grass and trees looked most beautiful in their desert surroundings. Here and there were lovely wild irises and a little yellow flower something like a double daisy, with a sweet scent, like pineapple, also a heliotrope-coloured flower with a delicate scent, and different kinds of cactus and thorns.

"On Tuesday night we stayed at an inn kept by a family of *Chan-ton*, as the Chinese call the Turki people. It was beautifully clean and tidy.

"We got our carts unloaded and they brought us tea and some nice hot home-made bread. One of the cows had calved so they milked her and gave us some warm milk. My! didn't we fairly enjoy it!!

"After we had finished tea the father of the family came along, a venerable old man of about 70 years. He wore a long white beard, fancy blue gown with a white pattern on it and a skull cap with a kind of gold threadwork pattern. The old man was very bent and leaned heavily on a stick. He came in, made his bow and bade us welcome. Then came his wife, with jet black hair hanging down her shoulders, and a little skull cap embroidered in green, red, gold and yellow. She wore a long fancy coloured gown tied loosely round the waist, and a pair of wide baggy trousers peeped out from underneath. All looked quite picturesque. The old lady

made her bow and bade us welcome, then two or three of their sons came along followed by their wives and children. I got out my fiddle, played and sang a few hymns, then Mr. Hunter preached to them in Turki. They are all Mohammedans."

T'u shui. "Muddy Water."

May 17th, 1914.

"We are spending Sunday in a place called 'Muddy Water' and if you looked at the water as it came out of the kettle you would see it was almost the colour of milk. It is better not to drink to the bottom of the teacup where there is quite a thick layer of mud. In spite of that, the water is sweet, not the awful bitter water of the desert. We are right in the midst of the mountains again about 9000 feet above sea level, and it is bitterly cold. We arrived yesterday afternoon about 3.0 p.m. in the teeth of a N. Easterly gale and a heavy snowstorm. In Hami it was very hot, almost like a summer day in the South. I thought of packing away my sheepskin gown but Mr. Hunter advised me not to do so, saying that one sometimes meets with blizzards when crossing the mountains. I was glad of my sheepskin yesterday, it kept me nice and cosy. The road was beautifully wild, winding in and out amongst rough mountains, with steep rocky sides, very, very rough and wild, without a tree or a blade of grass, but the many

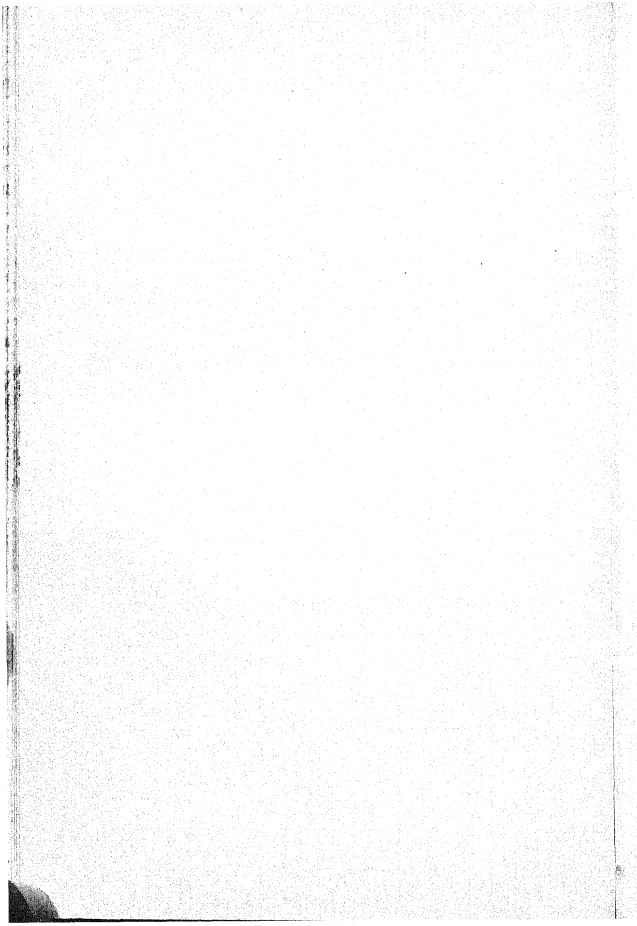
different tints in the rocks almost made up for the lack of vegetation.

“As we approached this oasis we saw some Tibetan yak. They have very long shaggy hair, and they give splendid milk. As soon as we got our carts unloaded M. went out scouting. This time he came back with a lot of wild garlick, which grows very freely on the mountains about here. We got out our bread, which we have had nine days now, but which is still fairly soft as the baker mixed linseed oil with the dough. I always cook the dinner and am getting quite a dab hand.

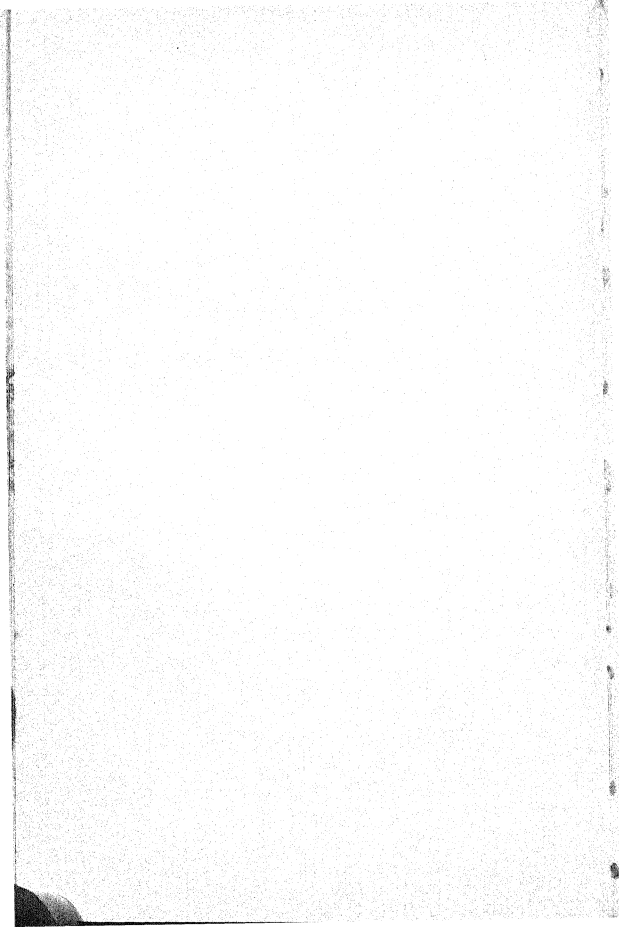
“On leaving the last stage two Chinese musicians followed us. One of them had a Chinese fiddle and the other a kind of dulcimer. I got out my fiddle, tuned up with their instruments and we played some Chinese tunes. They were splendid players, especially the one on the dulcimer. Before going the boss said he had a proposition to make—we were all going to Urumchi, why not travel together, play, sing and thus make a good deal of money as we went along, then divide it among the three and so clear expenses with something over besides. I thanked the old gentleman for the honour, but begged to be excused—I had my friends to consider, I had travelled with them all the way and could not very well leave them now. As for their coming with us, that could not very well be arranged as they

had no instruments, therefore could not take part in the performance and of course would not be entitled to any of the proceeds.

“What a long time it seems since I heard anything from you. Apart from a letter that week-end in Lanchow I’ve heard nothing since leaving Ningkwofu last January and I don’t suppose I shall hear anything more until I get to Urumchi.”



THE JOB



THE JOB

IT was midsummer when the three travellers entered that strange town which is the capital of Chinese Turkestan. The Turki calls it Urumchi, but the Chinese have named it Tihwafu, though they familiarly refer to it as "Red Temple." It is a big, turbulent, noisy, cosmopolitan town, and the evangelisation of such a centre must have impressed Percy Mather as a very different proposition to touring the villages of Ningkwofu out-stations.

On that first walk through the streets he jostled men of more racial diversity than he had yet dreamt of and his ears were filled with the babel of their tongues. It was a lusty, self-assertive crowd, but Mather, too, came of a strong stock and in him there was no shrinking from the business of life. He listened and observed and knew by an inward conviction that he had come to the very place of God's appointment for him, though he immediately recognised, and often said, that had it not been for the experience of normal Chinese life, and the knowledge of language and people which he had gained in Ningkwofu, he would have been hopelessly handicapped in Turkestan, as it was no place for a new recruit.

From Urumchi his genial escort, M., soon turned

back to the province of China where his own work lay, leaving Percy Mather to tackle his new job and adapt himself to the unfamiliar surroundings.

Urumchi.

June 5th, 1914.

"The Chinese in Urumchi are from every province of China. Very few settle, all come up with the idea of making money as quickly as possible, and if they don't make it within a very few years they just fall away into the worst kinds of vice and become thieves and vagabonds, spending their time in gambling, drunkenness and rioting. Very few of them have brought their wives so a great deal of wickedness is carried on. Many of the men seem to have left all their good manners behind them, and are more like Westerners of the worst stamp. In the south, even scamps knew how to be polite. Here, too, there are all kinds of types, Mongols, Tibetans, Turkis, Russians, Chantous, Hassas. Now and again we have Hindoos. I met an Indian quack doctor the other day, a fine, tall, well-built man. He shook hands and gave me the salaam, but could not speak Chinese.

"Yesterday two Russian soldiers came into Chapel during the service. They were fine, fresh, clear-complexioned, blue-eyed, fair-haired young fellows, just like our home sailor boys. I did so long to be able to speak to them, but when I went

up to try and talk I found they did not understand Chinese or English and I could not speak Russian. The people speak every dialect but they sink their differences in pronunciation to a great extent, and there is a kind of accommodated speech with many Turki words thrown in. One soon gets used to it and I can make myself understood perfectly.

“When there is preaching the people listen splendidly. I have no need to take my fiddle to get a crowd here. Some will stand for two and three hours. Mr. Hunter has a very good name in the town, he is well known and is respected by all. It is very hard to hold a Church together, for the people mostly do not settle in one place. As there are so few Chinese women up here there is little home life, but there are quite a lot of beautifully dressed Turki girls wearing silks of most gorgeous colour who go about quite openly among the Chinese. Iniquity of every description abounds. I never saw a single drunken man all the time I was in Ningkwofu, but here there are scores.

“I was in a Turki watchmaker’s shop the other day and he had two gramophones for sale. The family originally came from Constantinople and seven generations of them have been watchmakers. Mr. Hunter tells me that, a few years ago, some Russians opened a cinematograph show ; the people flocked to it every night, so much so that business began to suffer, consequently the Tientsin shop-

keepers banded themselves together and had the show stopped.

"There are scores of young fellows here wearing foreign dress. Some of them look very smart. They are mostly connected with military and civil officialdom. The very difficulties of the work lead one to praise God for having honoured one with a call to come here. Truly He plucked me out of Anhwei and planted me right away up in the North-West. Surely He has some special purpose in it all. Oh! for grace to be worthy.

"Whenever the Governor leaves or enters his Yamen three guns are fired. He goes out escorted by 200 cavalry in old style dress who carry flags of red, yellow and blue silk, and there are several men blowing trumpets. The Military Official rides in a four-wheeled carriage, attended by his body-guard. When the Official's wife goes about, she too is escorted by 200 mounted men, but she rides in a Chinese cart, the driver walking by the horses' heads, and a little slave girl, gaily dressed, with her cheeks highly painted and powdered, sits in front."

Urumchi.

June 29th, 1914.

"I had an accident yesterday and tore my nice gown. Mr. Hunter and I were out for a walk when a little boy passed us, leading a horse. All at once it knocked him down and bolted. I

managed to stop it all right and handed it back to the boy, but as he led it away it bolted again. I caught hold of the halter as the horse ran past and it dragged me across a little stream and along by the river. I still hung on but it went faster and faster until I could no longer keep up with it.

"At last it dragged me off my feet, and I went rolling into a bank of gravel. My hand and elbow were scratched but I did not care a bit about that, it was my only good gown that I was bothering about. It was torn in one place and the elbow rubbed through. Anyhow I'll have more sense next time for the horse stopped of its own accord about half-a-mile away, so I might have saved myself a lot of bother. Mr. Hunter was more concerned about me, but I was most concerned about my new clothes."

Urumchi.

August 17th, 1914.

"A few days ago one of the Post Office clerks happened to mention that two or three cart-loads of parcels were on their way up from Lanchow. Immediately I heard this the spirit of hope revived, and I began to wonder if there was not still a chance of my parcel turning up.

"Yesterday, Sunday, just as Mr. Hunter and I were finishing dinner, a messenger came from the Post Office bringing THE PARCEL safe and sound.

I did not stop to untie the knots but slipped the string off, and Mr. Hunter and I were soon feasting our eyes on the contents—two woollen singlets, two pairs pants, two woollen caps and some of my favourite sweets. As soon as I got hold of the parcel I could smell the sweets quite strongly. They were very good indeed. Mr. Hunter and I were munching them all afternoon yesterday. It gave me quite the old kind of 'Sunday afternoon feeling.' It is so long since you told me about the parcel that I have forgotten who to thank for the sweets.

"The woollen underclothing is simply splendid. You could not have sent me anything more acceptable, and such good material will last me for years. I never had as good a set as these before. Thank you all very, very much. I think I told you how my old things were all in rags, and how Mrs. M. mended them when I was in Lanchow, but they were too far gone and came to pieces on the way. Still they have done good service and it was time they were pensioned off.

"Yesterday afternoon Mr. Hunter and I went round to enquire after the Russian Consulate Doctor who we heard had typhoid. He attends the Russian Consul, his family, the Cossacks and Russian Community, but has no outside practice. We went round to the Russian Concession and found the house. A Cossack came to the door, who could speak no English, Chinese or Turki.

We were unable to speak Russian ; however, there was a Chantou limewashing the outside wall, who spoke Russian and acted as interpreter."

Urumchi.

August 24th, 1914.

"We are having a busy time pulling down some dirty buildings and putting up a little two-storied house for me to live in.

"Mr. Hunter and I are at it from early morning until late at night, carrying bricks, mortar and mud, planing timber, etc. By night-time we are both fagged out, but we sleep like tops and eat like horses, so are taking no harm. Before we began to build we were both going off our food a bit, with the heat, but now we can tackle anything. Our cook has left us and set off for his home in Shantung. It will take him over six months to walk there. We are now without a servant, so I am head cook, bottle washer and stable boy.

"The other day when working on the building I stepped on a plank the end of which did not quite reach the rafter and, of course, it gave way under me and down I went, but in falling I managed to clutch a beam and, thanks to God and my gymnastic training, was able to draw myself up unhurt.

"The Chinese labourers saw me falling and all shouted out thinking I was going to be killed,

but didn't they laugh when they saw how I saved myself. It was the topic of the whole afternoon's conversation. One of them came holding up his right thumb in the usual way and smiling as much as to say: 'My! that was fine! You must be a first class marvel!'"

Urumchi.

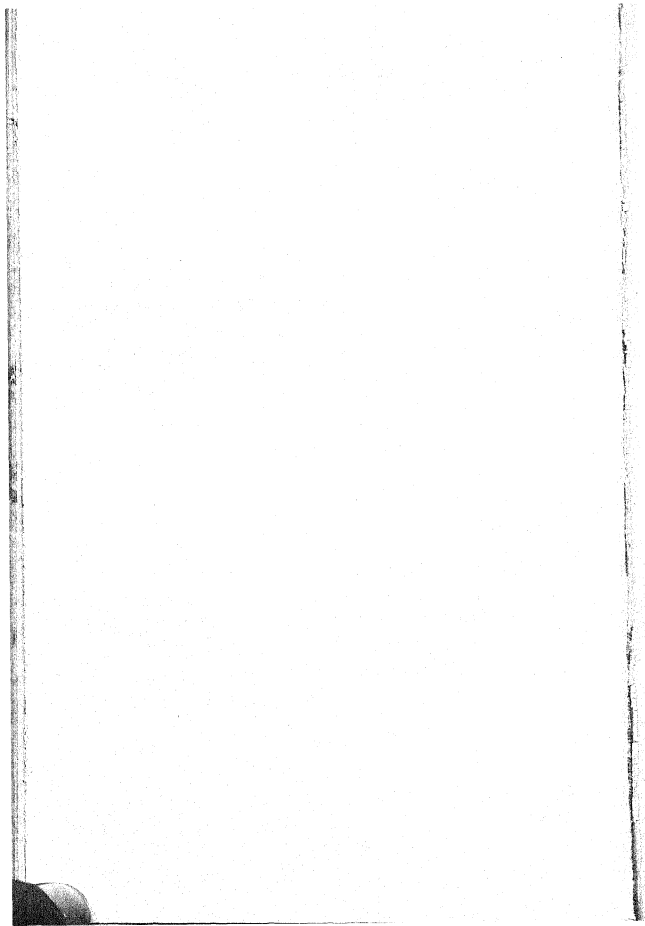
September 21st, 1914.

"I've been busy cutting glass and glazing windows, these past few days. The glass cutter has come in very handy. It does well though I do not think it cuts as clean as my old one. I have glazed 12 windows with about 80 panes. Our windows are made foreign fashion and open inwards.

"Glass is much better than paper, warmer and gives more light, but it is very dear here, 2/- for quite a small square. It is all brought by cart from Russia. The other day I had an idea and said to Mr. Hunter: 'I wonder if the photographer has any old plates for sale.' Mr. Hunter asked what good they would be. I said, 'Wash off the films and they would do for our windows.' Mr. Hunter said he would make enquiries, and soon he came back smiling and carrying several boxes of plates. We tried them in the windows and they were exactly the right fit for width, while two of them with a small strip let in, filled a pane. I made the joints quite tight so that very little wind will get



FAZAG AT TENT DOOR



through. Before washing off the films we had quite an amusing time examining the portraits. Mandarins in all the pomp and regalia of office, soldiers, civilians, Mohammedans, Chinese, Chantous, Manchus, men, women and children. Some looked quite proud, others very fierce, while others seemed scared as though the camera was a gun and might go off.

"The great problem was how to get the films washed off. I said, 'Get a bath of hot water, soak the plates and they will come off quite easily.' Mr. Hunter soaked them for a few minutes but when he came to take them out he found the plates all stuck fast together. He ran for a bucket of cold water and poured it over them but they stuck faster than ever. We had such a job for the film had melted and formed a vacuum, and it seemed impossible to get the plates apart. However, by forcing a knife blade under one corner and gradually taking it round the edges we managed to separate them but it was very exciting at first and looked as though our money was going to be wasted. When we got them into the windows they looked fine for the glass is of the very best quality, clear and without a flaw of any kind; moreover, they were very cheap and saved us a good deal of money.

"Our front door bell is a source of amusement to visitors, for it is a rusty iron tube with a wooden tongue and fastened to a spring we made out of an

iron band removed from a packing case. But the bell is very useful, for the spring is nailed to the door, and the wooden clapper makes a loud noise whenever the door is opened. Friends warn us to remove the bell before any archeologist comes along, lest he should require it for his collection!"

Urumchi.

September 28th, 1914.

"Did I tell you that another 'faithful' has come and gone? He was here for about ten days, then packed and left. Mr. Hunter and I had been out and when we got back our 'faithful' had all his things collected ready for leaving. He said a friend of his was offering him work with more money. We paid him up, said goodbye and he left at five minutes notice. Personally I was glad to get clear of him, for he was more trouble than he was worth. The servant question is a problem. Wages are five times as high as in the South. This last man was the fourth since I came. Now we are waiting to see what No. 5 will be like."

Urumchi.

November 2nd, 1914.

"I have just lighted a fire for myself, the first I have had since coming to China. Coal is very plentiful in the mountains close by. It only used to cost 6d for about 130 lbs., now it costs 1/- for

the same amount. Well, we cannot do without fires up here for the nights are very cold, especially when a wind gets up. The Chinese sleep with a fire inside their bed.

"Fleetwood seems to be very patriotic, judging by the numbers who volunteer for service. Fancy Cliff, Fred, and the others you mention being in the army. It does not seem very long since they were bits of lads in my Sunday School Class.

"I daresay it is nice to go off with crowds cheering and bands playing (though it is not much in my line), but it will be another thing when it comes to roughing it. Some will feel it hard at first, as I did, but if you set your teeth and stick at a thing it is surprising what you can do. I would not have believed that I could have gone through what I have had to go through, and had it not been that I was absolutely sure it was God's will for me I would not even have tried. 'If He command thee thou shalt be able.' All praise be to Him."

Urumchi.

October 12th, 1914.

"I've just been buying a picture for you. It has quite a history. The other day a Shansi man paid me a visit. He is a scholar, but I could see by his teeth that he was addicted to opium; they were almost black with eating the 'Foreign dirt' as it is called. Of course, being a scholar, he was very

polite and polished in manner, and high compliments were the order of the day. He was too foxy looking, however, for my liking, still we have to be polite to all and sundry. He asked all kinds of questions, but I knew he was sounding me to see how far he could go. After chatting a while, he rose, thanked me for the honour I had done him and said he hoped to 'come again and bask in my presence.' He also quoted some Chinese proverbs—'All within the four seas are brethren,' and 'First time, raw; second time, ripe.' This latter proverb refers to acquaintanceship and means that when first we meet we are quite raw to one another, but the next time we become ripe acquaintances. It is also used with reference to business, or in regard to trickery, 'raw' being used in the same sense as we use a 'raw hand', so that in a trade or occupation, we are first 'raw hands' and later on 'ripe hands.'

"In a few days my 'raw' acquaintance called again, but this time he was quite 'ripe.' Great and many were his professions of friendship, and he declared that he hoped to come often and perhaps we could break off his opium habit. His little foxy eyes gleamed, but I was watching him all the time and wondered what he was getting at.

"Then he began to unroll a parcel wrapped up in a cloth. I smiled and thought, 'Now it's coming.' Then he disclosed a copy-book with

characters which were beautifully written by a famous scholar in Hunan. He began :

“ ‘The other day when visiting your honoured establishment, I was greatly delighted to see that you recognised and were able to read the characters as used in my unworthy country. Your wisdom must be of the highest standard. As mark of my great admiration and esteem I beg to offer you a small copy book, which please accept.’

“As his eyes gleamed and he grinned away showing his black-stained opium teeth, I thought him the very perfection of a polished Chinese sharper, and I begged leave to refuse his honourable present. He pressed me to accept it but I still refused, until at last he used a word which means to ‘give-outright-freely.’ Then I yielded and accepted. His eyes lighted up and I thought ‘Now I’ve done it.’ I could have kicked myself. Just as he was leaving he again referred to the book, and trusted that my learning would still increase and that I would get much help from the small volume. Then came the sting :

“ ‘No doubt the foreign teacher is familiar with the custom of our unworthy country, which also holds good, I believe, in your honourable land, that is, in regard to the custom of exchanging presents. When something is given, another present is expected in return. However, I will not trouble your honourable person to hunt up a

present for me, but if you could just give me 2/- we will call it all settled.'

"Well, it was a question of either returning the present, and thus insulting him and also losing my own face, or paying 2/-. I went to my drawer and gave him a paper note for the amount. The Chinese characters on the note are printed in red, and red paper is used when giving presents in China, so as I handed him the note I smiled and said,

" 'We will not reckon this as money, we will just call it a piece of red paper. You have given me a book and I have given you a piece of red paper.' He sat a little longer and kept repeating,

" 'This is not a matter of buying and selling; it is all friendship, it is all friendship.'

"Then he took his departure, and as he left, again repeated his favourite proverb, 'First time, raw; second time, ripe,' while I whispered to myself, 'Yes, once bitten, twice shy.' All the same I was raw in more ways than one, and the more I thought over the affair the more raw I felt. To think that the man should have the audacity to come here, and fleece me. Sometimes as I thought it over I was 'proper mad,' to use a Fleetwood expression, and at other times quite amused. However, I thought 'He'll come again and I'll do my best to get my own back. I'll be 'ripe' enough for him next time.' (The book was only worth 6d.; but it was not the two shillings

that vexed me, only the feeling that I had been done.)

“A couple of days passed, and sure enough, my friend came again. I received him quite cordially and gave him a cup of tea, while he again expatiated on our ‘friendship.’ I will not repeat all the Chinese expressions of courtesy, it takes too long. He said that a friend of his was selling off some of his things, and he noticed among them a picture which he thought would be just the very thing for me. Then he unrolled before my vision a fairly good black and white picture of an old Chinese man. Of course he did not want to make money out of a friend and would let me have it at the same price as he paid for it, namely 6/-. It was a fairly good picture, worth the money, and it might be a bait for other cheap pictures, so I thought I would swallow the bait, and at the same time get some of my own back. I said I would be pleased to take the picture, and went into another room to get the money, but took the picture with me to make sure of it, smiling inwardly as I thought of a plan to get even with him. I got 3/6 out of my drawer and the Chinese copy book, then, turning to him, I expatiated on the beautiful characters, but said I was awfully sorry that my Chinese learning was so superficial that I must ask him to take back the book and give it to some more worthy person. Before he had time to recover from the shock, I said:

“ ‘ Let me see—I paid you 2/- for the book and you want 6/- for the picture, that leaves a balance of 4/-. Here is 3/6 ; call another day and I will give you the other 6d.’ ”

“ My ! wasn’t he taken down, and this time it was my turn to expatiate on our ‘ friendship.’ He went away pretty crestfallen, and I gave him a parting shot—‘ First time, raw, second time, ripe.’ I tell you I was as pleased as if I had captured a regiment of Germans. I was still owing him sixpence, a consideration to a Chinese, and, knowing that he was a scamp, I felt sure he would come round and ask for it. I made up my mind not to stand on ceremony. Sure enough he called again, but there was no cup of tea this time, and I stood on my dignity. He again alluded to our ‘ friendship,’ but there was not much response. He saw that things were not going smoothly and felt ill at ease. Then he pulled out some more parcels and said he had got some more presents for me. I said :

“ ‘ Thank you, but I don’t want to *buy* any more of your *presents*.’ ”

He tried to keep up a bright conversation, but found it hard work, so wrapped up his parcels and prepared to go. Then, smiling, he said :

“ ‘ Oh, could you give me that balance of 6d. you owe me ? ’ ”

I laughed and said :

“ ‘That is a small affair. Friendship! Friendship! What is the matter of a few cash between friends?’ and immediately turned the conversation to something else. He saw he’d got a hard nut to crack and I kept rubbing in ‘friendship.’ Then he tried again, saying :

“ ‘I am afraid you did not quite understand what I said just now.’

“ ‘Oh, yes,’ I replied, “I understand every word you say.’ ”

Urumchi,

Christmas, 1914.

“ Another Christmas in China. The fifth, and each one spent under such entirely different circumstances. This time we are honoured with Sir Aurel Stein as our guest.

“ Tuesday morning Mr. Hunter set out on horseback to meet him. It was snowing fairly heavily and blowing bitterly cold. I stayed behind to square things up and have everything ready for their arrival. About 3.0. p.m. Sir Aurel’s advance courier arrived bringing a letter from Sir Aurel. He had started off very early in order to prepare us for the coming of the party, seven people in all—Sir Aurel, his table boy and valet, cook, cook’s assistant, two pony men and Chinese Secretary. The cook is Indian and the rest Turki. There were seven or eight ponies, one cart, and several

luggage mules, besides some Indian surveyors and quite a lot of diggers with 15 camels, who have remained in Turfan. I gave the man who brought the note something to eat, then sent him to the city gate to watch for his master. About 4.45 p.m. I began to get anxious as no one had turned up and the city gates close about 5.0 p.m., so I ran off to the South Gate and asked the sentry to keep it open a little longer than usual as we were expecting a distinguished visitor. He promised to do so, and I started off home, but bethought myself that I had better stand by and see they did not lock up so turned back again. The gate was already closed but they had not yet put the lock on. Then the man from the Yamen arrived to take charge of the key (it is kept at the Magistrate's office) and, of course, he had to see that the gate was securely locked. I persuaded him to wait a bit longer, but he began to get anxious and afraid he might get into trouble, so I had to be diplomatic to induce him to keep it open. Just as I was beginning to think that I really ought not to press him any longer, we heard the sound of galloping hoofs and up came Sir Aurel, Mr. Hunter and the other men. The gate, of course, was already closed and at first they thought they were locked out, but I soon had my shoulder to the gate (a great massive thing of wood, studded and faced with iron), pushed it wide and got them safe into the city. It was a *very* narrow

escape and you can imagine how thankful they were. After welcoming the party I left the main street and took a short cut through back lanes, getting here before them. They and the ponies were covered with ice and snow. Mr. Hunter was very cold as he had ridden nearly 30 miles, 15 of which were against head-wind and snow. I had some piping hot soup waiting and that soon warmed them up.

"The cart with Sir Aurel's bedding did not turn up that night but stayed in an inn outside the city, so Mr. Hunter and I shared some of our bedding with him. Mr. Hunter has come in to live with me and give our visitor the run of his house.

"Wednesday and Thursday several of the Officials came round to pay their respects, and we also had a visit from the Governor. About 10.0 a.m. this morning we heard three salutes fired and knew that he was leaving his Yamen. Very soon there was a fanfare of trumpets and a galloping of horse-men, then the Governor drove up in a four-wheeled carriage. He had his little boy with him, and was attended by a host of civil and military officials. We went out and received him and he came into the house, followed by about 80 officials and soldiers, who swarmed all over the place while dozens more peered through the windows, to watch what was going on."

Urumchi.

January 18th, 1915.

"The extra cold snap is now over I am glad to say, though we still get plenty of snow. The other day we had a heavy fall which took most of the morning to clear away. In the afternoon I was busy washing for a couple of hours, then out on the street preaching and selling books. That evening I had about three and a half hours helping Mr. Hunter with his translation work, and afterwards I was reading and writing until about 1.0 a.m. Next morning I got up still feeling a bit tired, but I consoled myself with the thought that anyway there was no snow to clear away. Imagine my dismay when I looked out of the window and saw it coming down in lumps and already lying 6" deep on the ground. Snow here means WORK!

"I believe I told you about some Mongolians who came round here recently. I have often seen them in the city and have tried to find out where they stayed, but have been unsuccessful as none of them could speak Chinese and even when I offered them a Gospel in their own language they were afraid to take it. However, the other day I met one who could speak Chinese, and when I asked him where they lived he offered to show me and led me to a quiet part of the East suburb where,

against the city wall, was a big dwelling house and courtyard that was rented by them. I thanked the man and promised to call on the following day, so I collected a few Mongolian gospels, and also some in Tibetan as the Mongolian priests all read that language, indeed the religious books are in Tibetan. Next day Mr. Hunter and I set off to the place, which is about half-an-hour's walk from here.

"We found a Mongol attendant at the door and spoke to him in Chinese but he did not understand and he went to call someone. Then we noticed a Mongol tent in one corner of the courtyard. There were plenty of empty rooms in the house, yet the Mongols preferred their homely tent. Suddenly the flap was pushed aside and out came a woman with a bright little boy about 10 years old. He could not speak Chinese but was very friendly and asked to look at the books. Just then the attendant came back with the man who could speak Chinese and who recognised me. He was most friendly and invited us into the house. Others crowded around and all wanted to buy Gospels. Presently a Mongol lady came out. She was beautifully dressed and wore all kinds of ornaments. She gave us each a cup of tea in which was butter, salt and ginger; needless to say I did not ask for a second cup. They were very kind and the lady chatted quite freely through an interpreter. The

people seemed very free and more like westerners in their customs than are the Chinese. No Chinese lady would have remained in the same room with us but would have retired behind the curtain. We sold quite a number of Mongolian and Tibetan gospels and just before we left, the Prince sent his card asking us to excuse his absence as he was expecting a visit from the Governor. We invited them to our house and they, in turn, asked us to come again soon."

Urumchi.

February 8th, 1915.

"The other day I noticed a crowd gathered on the main street, and was told that a man had just been shot for forging tael notes. Close by was another crowd looking at something on the wall. It was a proclamation, giving the name of the man and the nature of his crime, while 1,600 one-tael notes were hanging up as evidence of his guilt. They were strung in bundles of a hundred, and two soldiers with fixed bayonets guarded them.

"I went across and had a look at the notes. They are splendid forgeries, the only differences from the real ones being that one character has a stroke too many, and that the ink is not fast and can be rubbed off with a moistened finger. There has been quite a number of these notes in circulation, and proclamations have been out offering a big

reward for any information that would lead to the conviction of the forger. Of course his greatest difficulty was not printing the notes but getting them into circulation. A few days ago, in an inn close to our place, he bought 100 taels worth of opium, and paid the seller in forged notes. Shortly afterwards the man who had sold the opium went into a shop and tendered one of the notes in payment. He gave it in good faith but the shopman detected the forgery and questioned him as to where it came from. He detained the man and sent for the police who brought soldiers. The customer led them to the man who had given him the note, and in his box they found nearly 2,000 forged notes. He was taken to the Yamen, where he confessed, and was sentenced to death. It was a bitterly cold day and the snow was falling, but he was made to march through the streets stripped to the waist, taken to the busiest street in the city, made to kneel down and was shot in the back, then four more shots were fired into different portions of his body. All this was done in full view of the people. However, they are quite callous and do not think much of it. When I went past, more people were looking at the false notes than at the man. The body lay exposed on the street all Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. The man was a native of Shensi, and on Wednesday night the members of the Shensi Guild sent a coffin and had

the body removed. For three days it lay in the snow, while the traffic surged past and people hardly took any notice of it."

Urumchi.

March 1st, 1915.

"Expenses here are more than double those in Anhwei. However, we found that by asking the Mission Treasurer in Shanghai to exchange our silver for paper roubles and send them on by post, we could negotiate them here at a good profit, and so manage to get along. We knew it was taking a big risk as the Post Office could not insure the letters; however, we decided to do it and got one remittance through safely. Last Sunday morning a registered letter arrived for me. The seals were unbroken and as it was just time for service, I did not bother to open the letter but let the postman go. After he had gone I thought I would look inside to see if all was right. The roubles had been stolen! I examined the envelope and saw how the theft had been done without breaking the seal. The letter was still in the envelope informing me that my remittance for this quarter was Taels 80, about £9. 0. 0., and this had purchased 107 roubles which at the present rate of exchange here would buy over 200 Taels. It was time for me to go in and take the service though you can imagine I had not much to inspire me. Now you will

understand why it is that the £2. 0. 0. I have just received from you is so acceptable. Whoever sent it the Lord was behind it, and it could not have come at a better time. Then a few days ago I received a postcard from S. saying he was sending me 5 dollars, Mex. (about 10/-). I also had word that Miss W. had been selling some of my things in Ningkwofu and had sent me on another £1. 0. 0. I have thirty taels in silver which I brought up with me as reserve, so I can manage till next quarter's remittance is due. All the same I was very sorry to lose those roubles as I was looking forward to buying a new set of Chinese clothes, for my present ones are pretty well worn out. However, the Lord knows what we stand in need of, and when the time comes the money will be there all right."

Urumchi.

March 22nd, 1915.

"The streets are in a shocking condition, in fact, as Mr. Hunter says: 'They are not streets but sewers.' The accumulated stench of the winter all seem to be escaping at once. The other day I went out preaching and bookselling and found the bottom of our street practically impassable. Looking about I saw a little bank and made for it, intending to climb over a rubbish heap and so avoid all the mud and slush. As it happened, the bank was of ice with a thin coat of mud, and

no sooner had I stepped on to it than my feet flew from under me and I went rolling in the mud. A Chinese gentleman came to my help, gathered up my books and expressed great sympathy on my behalf. He was very kind indeed. I went back, put on a clean set of clothes, got some more books, set off again and this time managed to stick on my feet. I was wearing my leather boots at the time and as they have big nails in them I could not keep my footing on the ice. This time my boots were my undoing though some time ago they were my salvation. I'm not sure whether I told you about it. We used to have an old Shensi man who came regularly to worship. He had not been for some time and, on enquiring, I heard that he was very poor, had no one to look after him and had gone to stay in the free quarters of a temple. I thought I would visit the old man and take him a present of bread, cakes, tea and meat. I enquired at several temples but no one knew anything about him, so finally I went to the 'Dragon Emperor's Temple.' While the old priest was coming out to greet me a big dog came running up from behind, and before I knew had me by the ankle with a tremendous grip, just like a man-trap. He held on for a moment and then sprang away. Happily I was wearing my strong leather boots and these saved me. His teeth marks were on the leather and my ankle was just as though it had been

sprained, but the skin was not broken. Had I been wearing my Chinese cloth shoes or had the dog got hold an inch higher he would have given me a tremendous bite."

Urumchi.

April 19th, 1915.

"This week I have been trying my hand at cooking. Broths, soups, custards and one day a beefsteak pie with a real crust! I suppose you would be a bit dubious of tackling my pies, but Mr. Hunter made the attempt and is evidently none the worse.

"Now about the weather. Last week was lovely and springlike, but this week-end has been terrible, a blizzard blowing most of the time.

"Saturday morning, 5.0. a.m., rain; 6.0 a.m. heavy hailstones, followed by snow; 11.0 a.m., bright sunshine. 12.0 noon, more snow; afternoon, sleet, snow, wind and hail. Yesterday was a cold windy day freezing most of the time. Last night there was another blizzard but to-day is fine and bright. The sun is very powerful, so the snow will melt away quickly, though it is still freezing in the shade. The mountains are grand in their white mantle of snow and the air is beautifully clear. Several men were frozen to death in the mountains during this snowstorm.

"Yesterday a Turki called me across to his shop

and wanted to look at some of my books. He bought two tracts, and immediately passed them on to a Mullah (one of their Scribes or Pharisees) who pulled out a box of matches and burnt the tracts publicly in the middle of the street. The young merchant laughed and tried to draw my attention to the burning tracts, but I took no notice. Meanwhile, a big crowd gathered round to hear me preach. I sat on the counter and the crowd filled the front of the shop, so the merchant began to think it was time to close and wanted me to move on, so that he could put up the shutters. I said, 'No, it was at your invitation I came here, and now that the people want to hear me, I'll stop until I've finished preaching, and then I'll go.' So the Moslem had nothing for it but to let me use his shop for the preaching of the Gospel."

Urumchi.

May 4th, 1915.

"How time flies! Long before this letter reaches you I shall have been here twelve months; to me it hardly seems twelve weeks. At this rate my furlough will be due very quickly. I do pray we may all be spared to meet again.

"A few days ago I was preaching in the South suburb, the stronghold of the Moslems and they were listening very well when up came a Chinese Mohammedan. He had not been listening two

minutes before he chimed in : ' Oh ! it is Jesus you're preaching about, is it ? ' ' Yes,' I replied. ' You say that Jesus is the Son of God, do you not ? ' ' How do you know what I say ? You have only just come and have not heard yet, but I *do* say that Jesus is the Son of God, and what is more, all who have repented of their sins and whose hearts have been cleansed are sons of God ; but as for those who curse, swear, drink, gamble and do all kinds of wickedness, those are the sons of Satan. As for you, I do not know you and have heard nothing at all about you, therefore I am unable to say whose son you are.'

" The crowd laughed and a man began to scold him for interrupting. Soon the two of them were swearing at one another and it took their friends all their time to keep them from fighting. I pointed toward him and said : ' There, you see the kind of man that comes interrupting ; whose son do you take him to be ? ' An old Moslem replied : ' Truly he is a son of Satan.' ' Maybe,' I said, ' but for all that, the Gospel can change his heart and make him a son of God.' Then I called out : ' Come on, my friend, and listen, this Gospel is for you.' He came over, listened all the time I was preaching and did not interrupt again."

Urumchi.

June 14th, 1915.

"Yesterday I was coming home about 10 p.m. It was a dark night, with no moon and I had no lantern. All went well until I got near our own street, when a dog rushed out and began to bark and snap at my heels. I foolishly shouted, which would have been all right during the day, but shouting at night brought all the dogs of the neighbourhood swarming at my heels, barking, growling and snapping at my legs. I could hardly see them in the dark and had nothing but a fan with which to defend myself. I thought I should have had my clothes torn off my back. I edged toward the wall until I came to some high railings and was not long in climbing to the top of them. The dogs below barked, growled and snapped like a pack of wolves. I wondered if I should have to spend the night out, but after about ten minutes the dogs scattered and I came down from my perch.

"The flies are now becoming a nuisance, and I have bought some netting to keep them at bay. They bite savagely, and are very persistent in their attacks. The mules are now wearing trousers to protect them and in a few days they will also be wearing sunbonnets, and a mosquito netting veil over their faces."

Urumchi.

July 7th, 1915.

"Rain at last, the first since May 4th. The people were getting very anxious, and a great deal of idolatry has been going on to provoke the Dragon King to send rain.

"Proclamations are out forbidding the slaughter of pigs, cows, and sheep. Two Tientsin men who transgressed were condemned to wear *cangues* and kneel in front of the Dragon King idol until rain came. Last Saturday I went to East Street where the Hupeh people had dragons out, whirling about at a tremendous rate. There were fireworks and some were throwing down water from the tops of the houses, thus making false rain to let the dragon know what was required. Practically every evening we could see rain falling in the mountain valleys, but the plain still remained dry. Occasionally the sky became overcast and a few scattered drops fell, but alas for the hopes of the people, a wind would spring up and drive all the clouds away. At last the Governor got desperate and last Saturday he did a most daring thing, he actually put a *cangue* on the Dragon King idol and threatened to leave it there and disgrace him until the required rain fell. Early on Monday it did rain, gently at first, then steadily faster until the streets were like streams of water. By evening the people

had had enough, but the rain kept on all through the night and all next day. The river rose to a tremendous height, Mr. Hunter had never seen it so big before. The bridge was badly damaged and it will be several months before they can repair it. Most of the houses began to leak and we could see people all along the street baling out water. Mr. Hunter and I, in our dry quarters, could not but laugh and say: 'The old Dragon idol is surely getting his own back on them for having disgraced him.' This morning the weather cleared up but the streets are in a dreadful mess. Mr. Hunter and I have just been along to have a look at the river and the bridge. The water looks fine, rushing along at a tremendous pace, carrying trees and wreckage with it. Men, women and children are there in crowds, fishing out firewood. The bridge has sagged down in one place, as one set of pillars has been undermined. Foot passengers can still use it but carts must now ford the river.

"I saw a carter attempting to ford the river, but he must have been mad or drunk. I called out: 'Look at that man trying to cross.' Mr. Hunter said: 'He will surely be drowned.' I could not take my eyes off him, and then, 'Oh, he's going—he's going—he's gone.' Horse and cart were turned over and over and swept along at a tremendous pace. The wheels came off and sometimes we could see the horse's head and then its

hoofs. We shouted to some men working in a water-mill, who were used to walking in the water during floods, repairing their dams and dykes. About eight of them plunged in, it was a treat to see them, half running, half carried along with the stream and sometimes swimming. By this time the man had been washed on to one bank, the wheels on to another, and the horse and cart had drifted further down. The horse was on its back, with its head under water and its feet pawing the air, making desperate efforts to keep its nose clear. Seeing the carter was all right the men went for the horse, got him unharnessed and on his feet again, and then salvaged the cart and wheels. It was interesting to watch them, sometimes carrying the cart bodily without the wheels; at other times cart and men all drifting down the river, but the men gradually pushed the cart to the bank until they got it safe to shore."

Sweet Valley, 50 miles South-West of Urumchi.

July 15th, 1915.

"I wonder what you would give to see what I am seeing now—a bonny Mongol maiden, about 12 years of age, galloping up and down on horse-back, driving her cattle to the pasture just above here. She sits in the saddle like a little princess, driving thirty cows, several calves, one or two horses and a foal. The cows are inclined to be

lazy and keep lagging behind, while the little girl gallops from one side to the other and rounds them up. Now she rides under the trees and breaks off a long thin branch, now she comes along at a tremendous pace, swinging the branch and screaming at the cattle, making them hurry up a bit. She is dressed in a gown of dull chocolate red, gathered in with a yellow sash, and falling away in pleats below the waist. There is black trimming round the neck and the dress reaches just below the knees. She also wears a pair of yellow trousers which show below her gown. She is without shoes, stockings or hat, and her hair hangs in a long plait. She has jet-black hair and eyebrows, almond eyes and a lovely golden complexion.

"We left Urumchi last Tuesday morning. We were up before daylight, gathered our things together and got away about 6 a.m. There are three of us, Mr. Hunter, a Turki servant and myself. We have three animals with us, Mr. Hunter's horse and two mules. We have a tent, bedding, pots, pans, kettles, flour, rice, oil, tea, bread and dried fruits, so we are having quite a picnic. Mr. Hunter has gone off to see if he can find any mushrooms, our man is out looking after the beasts, and I am sitting in the tent with my fiddle case on my knee writing this letter. It is not a steady desk, hence the shaky writing. The first day we did

thirty miles, leaving the city by the West Gate and fording the river which had gone down considerably since last week and had divided into twelve swift-flowing streams. The morning air was beautifully cool and sweet and the Bogdo looked fine, its snowy peaks towering high.

"We travelled on, sometimes through desert and sometimes through fertile plain until we came to the foothills, where all was beautifully green with scattered farms. We chose an open space on a little hill near a ruined temple dedicated to the god of wealth. In choosing a place for camp three things are necessary—water, grass and fuel. The place should be high to avoid flooding. It was the sight of a Mongol tent close by the temple that decided the place for our camp, for we hoped to get plenty of milk. After unloading the mules we pitched the tent and our man went to look for fuel, which was scarce, but dry cow dung burns splendidly and is very hot, almost like coal. We soon had some water boiling and made tea, then I sent our man to the Mongol tent to ask for milk. He came back with a quart of sheep's milk; it was a bit strong, but Mr. Hunter and I soon polished it off.

"After tea the sons of the Mohammedan farmer named Ma, with some farm labourers gathered round. He seems to be a very wealthy man and has many horses, cows and sheep. I got out my

fiddle, Mr. Hunter his concertina, and we played and sang to a good crowd, then preached and gave away Gospels and tracts. Before going to bed the farmers brought us some firewood and bread and invited us to dine with them. Next morning the Ma family came to see us off, and gave us a present of four loaves of bread and twelve eggs."

July 19th, 1915.

"This morning I walked out to some tents. The Mongols invited me in and after regaling me with buttermilk, bread, and tea flavoured with butter and salt, they asked me to play my fiddle. How they enjoyed it! Then I asked them to sing and said I would accompany them. The men all said they could not sing, but that the lady could sing very nicely, and after a little persuasion she bashfully consented. She had a sweet voice and sang a weird, strange air, full of minor intervals, not at all like a Chinese tune. It was very difficult to follow, but I managed to play without too much discord and they enjoyed it as much as I did.

"In the middle of the tent a big fire burnt, and the smoke went straight up through a hole, while the heat filled the tent. Over the fire was a big iron stand and on the stand an iron pot, something like a wash boiler, with a wooden lid fixed and made tight with clay. A wooden tube, also made tight with clay, ran from the boiler to a smaller

vessel which was standing in a dish filled with water. I guessed what they were up to, and was not surprised when they told me they were distilling spirit, and they were distilling it from milk. Did you ever hear of such a thing? Drinking is the great vice of the Mongol. They pressed me strongly to stay, saying the wine was almost ready, and they would kill a lamb for a feast. However, I begged to be excused and went back to Mr. Hunter. He had a feast for me! What do you think it was? Strawberry jam! yum! yum! The dear man had been out all afternoon gathering strawberries, and while I sat with the Mongols he made jam. It was very nice indeed. Wild strawberries grow plentifully in some parts of the woods, they are very small and take a lot of picking, but they make splendid jam."

Head of Sweet Valley, on the spur of a hill close to big patch of snow.

July 26th, 1915.

"Here we are with our tent pitched in another spot. We are 20 miles higher up the valley and about 2,000 feet higher up the mountains. We came here last Saturday and now our stores are almost finished, so we shall soon have to be packing up again. You will be interested to hear that I rode to the city and back. Let me tell you about it. Last Friday night we went to bed early as we

were tired, having been for a ride over the mountains to a valley lying east. The horses and two mules were fastened up near the tent door with the Turki man sleeping in the middle of them. About midnight we were wakened by the Mongol dogs barking very fiercely and we thought it must be a wolf, but knowing that our man was with the animals we did not take much notice. About 2 a.m. I was wakened by the Turki driver calling out, 'The horse has gone.' I jumped up, ran out and sure enough the horse was missing. I examined the rope which looked very much as though it had been cut, so I dressed and, with the Turki, went down the valley to where wheat was growing, thinking that perhaps the horse had broken loose and gone to feed on the wheat. We wandered about all night and came back at dawn without any trace of the beast. Mr. Hunter then went along one side of the valley and I along the other to search for footmarks, but could find none. Then I put my thinking cap on and began to study which way *I* would take the horse if *I* were the thief. I decided that I would lie in wait under a bank, then steal quietly up, take the horse and, instead of going the usual way, cross the river and take a roundabout road by the edge of the wood. It had been raining during the early part of the night and all the old marks had been washed out, so, if the horse had gone the way I reckoned, there

should be fresh tracks on the far bank of the river. I went across to look and there, as I thought, were the fresh marks which Mr. Hunter identified as the marks of his horse.

"Just then the young Mongol, 'Heavenly Candle,' came up and I told him about the affair. He immediately set off to follow up the tracks and came back, saying: 'The thief has taken the big road toward the city.' 'Heavenly Candle' ran and saddled his two big grey horses, and he and I set off to trace the thief. As he was saddling, a party of Hassas came riding along toward the city, so we asked them to let us get ahead lest they should trample the tracks of the horse. They were all excitement at the prospect of catching the thief, and off we galloped. When we had gone about half-a-mile I heard a colt calling out behind, and saw that it belonged to the mare I was riding; so I asked 'Heavenly Candle' whether we had not better turn it back, but he said, 'Never mind, let it follow.' We galloped along, with our eyes fixed on the road where the hoof prints were quite visible. We noticed that, at one place, the horse had been taken off the main road to avoid passing houses, but further along we found the tracks again. We rode for about 15 miles, sometimes missing the track, at other times finding it again, then we began to have difficulty as the tracks became covered over with the traces of other beasts.

"At 'The god of wealth temple,' we reported to the head farmer. Then I turned to 'Heavenly Candle' and said, 'What shall we do now?' He said, 'Do what you think best. If you want me to go to the city, I'm willing. I'll do anything to help you.' I decided for the city, so we jumped into our saddles and galloped off again. The little Mongol set the pace. He was only a little chap, smaller than I, and of slender build, but he *could* ride, and I had to follow. I had never ridden so far or so fast in my life. Sometimes the colt was left far behind and would cry out most piteously, but it had to follow as best it could. It was a hot, dusty day, and our mouths were parched with thirst. About 6 miles from Urumchi we came to an inn and weren't we just glad of some tea and hard-boiled eggs! We drank 6 basins of tea, and eat 4 eggs each. Then off again. When we got to the river we found the water very high, but 'Heavenly Candle' plunged in and I had to follow. He had not gone far before his horse was out of its depth; another step, and it would have been washed down the river, but he managed to pull its head round and get it into shallow water. We found an easier place to cross and got home in safety. Then I found I had no key, having come away with just the clothes I stood in and a mackintosh, so I climbed a wall, forced a window and opened the door for 'Heavenly Candle.' We led



GEORGE HUNTER AND PERCY MATHER

the two horses and the colt round to the stable and gave them a feed, then had something to eat ourselves. I changed into clean clothes, bought a new hat, engaged a cart and drove round to the Yamen to report the matter to the Governor. He received me very kindly and promised to do his best to find the horse. Then we went home and began to prepare for bed. Oh, how tired we were! We had ridden over 50 miles without anything to eat or drink, and I had been up all night and started without breakfast.

"Next morning about 6.0 a.m. the Governor put out a proclamation and sent round a copy for us to take to the village Elders, ordering them to search for the horse. 'Heavenly Candle' decided to set off at once with the mare and colt, and I decided to stop over Sunday and take the service. I gave 'Heavenly Candle' 4/- to buy some things to take back with him, also some of my old clothes, a shirt, a pair of Chinese boots, and that old Trilby hat that Mother bought me when I was in the Bible Training Institute. It was much the worse for wear but he was greatly delighted with it and it suited him. He is a fine little chap and I like him very much. I wonder how many people at home would ride over 100 miles to help one find a horse. He looked very picturesque and wore a fancy-shaped silver earring in one ear. I begged it from him as a memento and he gave it to me, but I could see he

was a bit loath to part with it, and after questioning him I found that it was a charm. He had had two children, both died, and this was a charm to ensure the life of his next child, so of course I gave it back to him, and he promised to get me another.

"On Monday morning I made an early start and returned to the mountains. How glad Mr. Hunter was to see me back!"

August 2nd, 1915.

"Yesterday we had a visit from a Hassa riding an ox. Mr. Hunter asked if he would lend it to carry some of our things higher up the valley. The man agreed, and very soon we struck our tent and packed. 'Heavenly Candle' came along and helped us. The others all came around to say goodbye and we were very sorry to leave them. We went about half a mile up the valley, then climbed a hill and came to a huge tableland which sloped gradually up towards the high mountains. A most lovely sight, simply impossible to describe. I have never seen anything like it. Everything on such a large scale and yet so clear and distinct. We could see Urumchi quite plainly, 60 miles away, nestling at the foot of a mountain, while the Bogdo peak, over 100 miles away, looked just as plain, big and distinct as ever, in fact one had a better idea of its huge bulk when further away. We were now on a table-land of beautiful grass, with here and

there hollows filled with pine trees, the valleys all round too were filled with pines. The tableland sloped gradually up to the high mountains and looked like a huge park of fresh green grass, dotted with the tents of the Hassas and with flocks of sheep, cows and camels.

“As we passed the tent of the man who lent us the ox, his wife and children came out and brought us thick buttermilk to drink and invited us to rest awhile. We drank the milk (fancy me drinking buttermilk!) and pushed on our way. The road now began to get a bit steeper and the ox, which was a very heavy one, kept wanting to lie down and rest, but after a vigorous twisting of the tail and beating on the back it decided to get up and go on. Sometimes it appeared to be in doubt and made as if to lie down, but a twist of the tail decided the matter. We pushed on 5 miles, then came to a little knoll surrounded by pine trees on three sides and open towards Urumchi. We were about 8,000 ft. high, and commanded a glorious view. We soon had our loads unpacked and our tent pitched. Just then a little Hassa boy came along driving his sheep and goats. He stopped to look at us, so we passed him our enamelled wash-bowl and told him to fill it with milk and we would give him some cash. It was as good as a circus to watch the boy catch the animals. He would pretend to be running past the sheep or goat

and then all at once would dive to one side and catch it by the tail or hind leg. The sheep would bolt and drag the little boy quite a long way before he managed to stop it and sometimes it got away altogether. He came back with the basin less than half full and said he could not get any more, so I went along with him to help. We decided to tackle a strong ewe, almost the size of a donkey. I caught it by the hind leg and the little boy had it by the neck, but it bolted and dragged us both off our feet. We hung on until the sheep could run no further and we were all in a heap, panting for breath. Then I held its head and the little boy went back for the basin and soon had it filled with nice, sweet milk. We gave him some money and what he liked much better, some dried grapes. We put rice on to boil, threw in some dried grapes and milk and soon had a delicious pudding."

August 23rd, 1915.

"We did not stay long in our last camp, provisions were all used up and there was nothing for it but to beat a retreat. It was no use trying to fight against hunger on the mountain tops, so I took our last measure of flour and baked a cake, emptied out the last of our wheatmeal and made some porridge while Mr. Hunter went out scouting and captured two enormous mushrooms. We sent our man to get the little shepherd boy

to milk his sheep and, meanwhile, I cooked the mushrooms with a piece of mutton fat that we got from the Hassa and so we had quite a tasty breakfast. The Turki smacked his lips over the mushrooms and did not raise any objections about the fat. Breakfast over, we packed our things, struck tent, loaded the mules and set off toward Urumchi. The first stage was nearly all down hill, and by evening we landed at the mouth of Sweet Valley. I suggested staying near 'Heavenly Candle' but when we got to within a mile of the tents Mr. Hunter, who was very tired, said we had better not go any further as it was getting dark. However, the Mongols had already seen us. The elder brother with little Betta came out to welcome us and to press us to go and stay close by their tent and we did so. How those people welcomed us! Some helped to unload the mules, others to pitch the tent. 'Heavenly Candle' ran to the river and carried up some big stones to make a fireplace, others brought firewood and made a big fire, while some carried up water and put it on to boil. Meanwhile the women folk in the tent were all busy baking and soon they came with delicious bread, tea, milk and butter. They also killed a lamb and brought us a lot of nice fresh mutton. I have never had such a loving, *practical* welcome before.

"We went to bed and about midnight were awakened by a loud rumbling sound just like an

earthquake or a landslide. We could hear the Mongols shouting so I jumped up and asked what was the matter. They said a wolf had frightened the sheep, and the noise we heard was the thousands of hoofs as they stampeded. The dogs were running about barking and the wolf went away without his meal, but we heard later on that he had been to some flocks higher up and killed one sheep and wounded another. The Mongols saw the wolf sniffing round our tent after the mutton we had inside.

“We spent the next day in Sweet Valley hoping to get a timber cart to take some of our things to the city, but were disappointed. ‘Heavenly Candle’ invited us over to his tent for dinner, and gave us mutton and dough-strips, in Chinese style. I took my fiddle along and they enjoyed it immensely. They sang and I accompanied. Little Betta was not a bit shy. We played hide-and-seek, and now and again she would throw her arms round my neck and kiss me just like a little English child. She is a bonny, chubby, rosy-faced wee thing; how you would just love to see her. Then I got out some pictures and preached the Gospel, ‘Heavenly Candle’ acting as interpreter for those who could not understand Chinese. We had an enjoyable time and these Mongols made us feel quite at home. Later on Mr. Hunter and I went out, gathered strawberries and made some jam to take back.

"Next day we packed up and said goodbye to our Mongol friends. It was rather dull weather and we were glad as it was much easier for walking ; about 4.0 p.m. however, it began to rain, so we pushed on and tried to get as near the city as possible. About 7.0 p.m., it was getting dark and as we were all tired out, we looked for a likely place to pitch our tent.

"Travel is quite different here from Anhwei. There we could sit and rest at an inn every few miles, drink tea and have something to eat. Here, once we start, we must go on to the end of the stage, 20 or 30 miles. There, when we got in, we had an innkeeper waiting on us ; here, in the desert, you have to look after yourself.

"Well, we pitched our tent. It was still raining, so by the time we had made a fire (not easy with damp wood) and baked a cake of bread, it was quite dark. However, we all enjoyed our tea of bread and home-made strawberry jam, then I kneaded some flour and baked more bread, ready for breakfast. Having walked all day without anything to eat, tramped a good 20 miles of rough mountain road, unloaded the mules, pitched the tent and prepared a meal, it did not take long to get off to sleep. By the way, I have no pillow for I discarded mine when I left Ningkwofu. A bundle of clothes under one's head does fine and saves having to wash pillow-slips."

Urumchi.

September 1st, 1915.

"Here begins the last chapter of 'Our Trip to the Mountains.' We rose at daybreak hoping to make an early start. It was a fine clear morning and the mountains looked beautiful after the rain. Our tent was still wet and too heavy to pack, so we had to wait to dry it. Meantime we had breakfast and when the sun rose it soon dried. We struck tent for the last time and set off on the 20 mile stage. There was nothing of interest to report as the road was practically all desert until we got to an inn 6 miles from the city, where we bought a big melon which we enjoyed very much. We enquired whether the river was high and were told 'Yes, very high.' Just as we were getting near the bank one of the loads slipped and fell to the ground, so we had to repack all over again. It was a good thing it happened before we reached the river, as the animal might easily have been drowned. We found the water terribly high and rushing along at tremendous speed. Mr. Hunter thought it was impossible to cross so we made towards the bridge, but had not gone far before we met a man who told us that the bridge was washed away. Two spans of it had already gone, so there was nothing for it but to ford the river which was nearly waist deep. Two young

Mohammedans who knew the deep and shallow places in the river came riding up. One of them recognised us and offered to pilot us across and we were very glad of his help. Mr. Hunter rode, I walked, but we had quite an exciting time. Our man was afraid to chance it and came across later in a high cart. We got our mules, goods and chattels safely over and were very thankful to God, for it was extremely dangerous. Another half-hour saw us safely home, sweet home and thus ends our journey.

“To-morrow will be September 2. Just five years since I set sail from ‘bonny England.’ ‘East, West, home is best.’ How time flies! God willing, it will not be long before we see one another again, and then won’t we have a time!”

Percy Mather had lost his heart, and had lost it to the Mongols. Ever since his first contact in the Urumchi inn he had an impulse of friendship towards them. He loved their spontaneity, their hospitality, their simplicity and their child-nature. Camping among the mountains the sight of boys taking part in displays of horsemanship, or of little Betta, rounding up a herd of cattle with native skill, fascinated him, and when these same children joined him in a playful romp or a mischievous prank, they loved him as he loved them and soon became fast friends.

He instinctively knew the best way of approach to primitive folk and when he walked into an encampment, fiddle under arm, there was immediate response and mutual understanding. Among the Mongols he became as a Mongol.

He was unaffectedly interested in all their affairs, and the erection of a tent, the management of a restive horse, the training of a dog or the building of a camp fire, were things which he delighted to learn. His letters are full of notes and of pen-and-ink sketches showing how these things were done. In return for their kindness, he used his simple medical skill and the contents of his medicine chest to relieve physical ailments, and it was largely for the sake of the Mongol that he spent months of his one precious furlough studying at an ophthalmic hospital.

That the attraction was mutual is evidenced continually in his letters, as when he writes: "The head-man is a hearty old fellow, and fond of a joke. He has a married son, daughter-in-law and grandchild, and they all live together in one tent. They are exceedingly kind to me and are very glad to have me in their camp. The old man's eyes are so much better that he thinks I have performed a miracle, and the news has spread far and wide. Recently I attended the Princess for indigestion, lanced a boil for one of her retainers and set a broken leg for another. I am going ahead slowly

with the language, but it is difficult, indeed, when you have neither dictionary nor grammar."

To the Mongol, Percy Mather always showed himself the friendly man, helpful, capable, approachable, eminently understandable and obviously without guile. From the first moment of contact they recognised in him one who would never take advantage of their simplicity. If, in the country, he was their guest, in town he became their helper in all manner of ways, and would go with them to shops to show them where and how to buy, entertain them in his house and, what they liked best, escort them to a photographer to have a portrait taken. He was a true illustration of the Lord's words: "Ye are light; ye are salt," and at the mention of his name the writers have seen Mongols raise both thumbs in the highest expression of praise they know.

His love for the primitive people took him constantly to their quarters in Urumchi, then among the mountain encampments, farther on to Karashar, up to the Altai mountains and among the scattered Kalmuk everywhere. From one encampment he wrote: "Each Sunday evening I hold a service and preach through a Mongol interpreter. I long for the time when I may be able to speak their language freely. I am not yet fluent, but meanwhile I count it a great honour to be able to preach, even through an interpreter, to those poor deluded

souls. Light has been given to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death."

Back in town he wrote again: "I have been at the jail visiting a poor Mongol dying of consumption. He spoke no Chinese, but I did my best with broken Mongolian and picked out the words from the Gospel, 'Lord be merciful to me a sinner.' When I called again I asked whether he remembered them. He nodded 'yes,' but could not speak. Then he pointed to his heart and gasped out: 'I have them here.'

"You ask me when I shall be coming home. I would just love to see you all again, but I believe the Lord wants me to do something for these poor Mongols."

His visits among prisoners brought him in contact with a well-educated Mongol who spoke Chinese fluently but who had committed a crime and was confined in a cage serving a term of imprisonment. Mather obtained permission from the prison governor to have the cage opened that he might go in and sit with the prisoner. This was his opportunity to learn the elements of the Mongolian language, and each day the two men sat together in this strange place, the prisoner teaching the missionary, and the missionary teaching the prisoner.

When a man is so keen to buy up opportunities, opportunities are brought within his reach, and

some time later, when travelling among the Kalmuks, a Living Buddha who was friendly with Mr. Hunter and his companion, gave them a Mongol boy to be their personal servant. This boy was the youth Nimgir, a simple fellow but faithful, who became devotedly attached to his masters. Here was Percy Mather's chance to make himself a proficient Mongol speaker, and here was the natural means of effecting an entrance among the nomads. "He is one of ourselves," the tribesmen would say, when they saw Nimgir riding ahead, and one word from him broke down prejudice, dispelled fear and prepared a welcome for the missionary who followed.

The laborious business of working his own way through the dialects of various tribes without the help of books drove Mather to the preparation of dictionaries and grammars to help those who would come after. Once again opportunity served him. A Russo-Mongol dictionary was brought to Urumchi after the Russian revolution, and the man who owned it wanted money and was prepared to sell. Percy Mather promptly invested all he had in this rare and expensive book, and with the help of a Russian friend and a Mongolian scribe, the work of translation was done. But in order to accomplish this task, in a life already too busy, he took the habit of working into the early hours of the morning and in this way seriously overtaxed his strength.

Toksun, S.-E. of Urumchi.

September 9th, 1915.

"Mr. Hunter, a Chinese boy and I left the city last Thursday taking our complete camping outfit and provisions of rice, flour, wheatmeal and dried fruits. As soon as we got clear of the city the ground became stony and hard, practically desert. It was the first time we had taken Mr. Hunter's new horse out and it proved a willing little beast, a bit timid but it will soon get over that. About 2.0 p.m. we came to a ruined city, the walls of which were still standing but there was not a single person to be seen. We wondered whether to camp here or go on, but one of the mules was limping and that decided us to camp. We unloaded the animals and started to boil some rice. Then the horse got loose and I had a job to catch it. I was afraid it might run off to the mountains, being a mountain pony born and bred in the hills, in which case we should never have seen it again.

"After supper we shackled the horses and turned in. The province now swarms with horse thieves. Formerly the people used to plant opium, but this has been suppressed and they have turned to horse stealing. About 11.0 p.m. a mule got loose and started off on its own for grass. It could not get along quickly because of the shackles which I could hear bumping along the ground, so I ran out in

bare feet and brought it back. Later the other mule got hungry, went out after grass and I had another chase. I had just settled nicely again when Mr. Hunter called out 'Thieves.' I sprang up like a shot but was reassured by the voice of our boy saying 'It is nothing, I am seeing to the beasts.' The animals were both cold and hungry and stamping about wanting grass, so Mr. Hunter sent the boy to cut some. He returned with a big bundle on his back which so frightened the beasts that they all stampeded and we had another chase. Fortunately they were shackled or we might never have seen them again. My mule was trembling like a leaf. Very soon after this, dawn broke and we cooked breakfast, packed and set off again.

"Next day we came across eight Mongols who had been out hunting. They were squatting down in a circle, having something to eat, and there in the midst of them was a big eagle, taller than the sitting men. They evidently used the bird for hunting purposes. They were just round a bend in the road so that we came upon them all at once. It was a strange sight to see them sitting there with the bird looking as solemn as a judge in the centre. I have often seen Turkis hunting with falcons and hawks but never with such a large bird as this. Riding further we overtook a Turki and his boy who were driving about twenty donkeys

laden with flour to sell to the Mongols. We rode along with them and coming to a place where there was abundant grass, plenty of water and firewood, we decided to camp together for safety. It was beautiful mild weather and we did not pitch the tent but slept in the open, in order to get off early next morning. The boy made a fire, I washed some rice and put it on to boil. Then I went up the valley to a Hassa tent to buy some milk. While the lady of the tent was milking the cow, the man showed me his gun, a Russian army rifle. He then pulled out some cartridges and asked me if we had any, but I pretended not to understand his meaning, and only said 'Yes, they are good guns.' One never knows what these chaps are up to, and I thought he might be fishing to find out whether we had guns or not. There were two other rough looking customers in the tent when I came, but they soon left; I did not care for the look of them. I took the milk back and we were soon tucking into a good supper.

"Just before dark the Hassa came, bringing his gun and asked Mr. Hunter if we had any cartridges. He said 'No,' and the man went back having found out that we were quite unarmed. After supper I kneaded some dough, made eight or nine beautiful scones and baked them in the ashes. There was no moon and as the valley was narrow it was very dark. The mountains were steep and covered

with thick forests of fir trees. Here and there the rocks jutted out in overhanging crags. We decided to keep fires going and take turns to watch, the Chinese boy taking from 9.0 to 12.0. He collected a lot of firewood and soon had a tremendous fire blazing, so that it was quite light all round our camp, though pitch dark in the trees beyond. We turned into bed, and not having had much rest the night before, were soon fast asleep.

"At midnight Mr. Hunter gave a tremendous yell of 'Thieves! Thieves!' I sprang up like a shot; Mr. Hunter was already running toward the woods, but I soon passed him and ran on ahead, though hearing and seeing nothing I had to give up. Mr. Hunter said that while lying asleep he became conscious of something near his pillow like a wolf, or a man on all fours, but before he could make it out it had disappeared. The animals were still fastened and our boy declared that he was watching and that it must have been a wolf prowling around. Just then Mr. Hunter went to see if his rouble notes were all right and after fumbling about in the bag he said, in tragic tones, 'They're gone! They're all gone! They have taken my roubles.' But I noticed he was feeling in the wrong bag and said: 'Why, that is not your bag, that is the boy's bag.' He then felt in his own and found them all right.

"The boy declared again 'It was only a wolf

prowling round,' and as our horses were all right and Mr. Hunter's money safe, I turned into bed and hoped to get a bit of sleep before it was my turn to watch. Mr. Hunter did not like the idea of going to sleep when either wolves or thieves were about. As we were lying in the open with our clothes for pillow, it would be quite easy for a wolf to come along and bite a piece off our ears, but I decided to risk it. Ten minutes later Mr. Hunter asked where the bread was. I said, 'In the bag over there.' 'Where is the bag?' 'Along with the other bags beside the tent.' 'I don't see the tent,' he said. Hearing this I thought it time to get up, and sure enough, tent, bags and provisions had all disappeared. We were so anxious about horses and money, that we had not noticed that all the other things had gone. It did not take me long to get dressed when I heard this story, and, arming ourselves with stout sticks, the Chinese boy and I prepared to go in the woods and see if we could recover any of our things. We called up the Turki and his boy. They were sorry about it, but did not feel like entering the woods on a pitch dark night, without knowing how many thieves there were and whether they were armed. With us it was different, we had lost practically everything and unless we got, at least, our tent back, we could not continue the journey. Practically all my things had been stolen except

bedding and a few Chinese clothes which, happily, I was using as pillow. My good foreign boots, in which I have walked so many hundreds of miles, had gone, also one of the thick singlets that you gave me, the hug-me-tight that you made for me, the razor H. gave me, my strop, brush and soap, also a little square toffy box which has gone with me on all my journeys and was very useful for holding odds and ends. Inside it I had scissors, a Chinese pocket dictionary, a pair of smoked spectacles, several little bottles of medicine, two pairs of warm socks, notepaper, stamps and envelopes, my passport and a little Chinese New Testament. I happened to have been reading my pocket Bible and had not put it back in the box, so that was all right. I also lost two pairs of Chinese socks, a shirt and two handkerchiefs. I think that was all I had taken with me and it was all gone, besides all our flour, rice, dried fruit, salt, sugar, and almost worst of all, those beautiful scones that I sat up specially to bake. That was the last straw and I determined to try and do something even if it meant only getting a scone and the tent back again. We guessed there were at least two thieves and that one had stayed on the edge of the wood while the other crept along, passed our things to his partner and came back for more. He must have made at least three journeys, on two of them he had been successful, but on the third he happened to wake

Mr. Hunter and had to get away in a hurry. We also knew they had knives as some strong rope had been cut through.

"Happily Mr. Hunter's foreign saddle and all our harness was still intact as was also a bag in which Mr. Hunter had a few spare clothes and the Chinese Gospels. Mr. Hunter tried to persuade me not to go after the thieves, but on my promising not to go far, he consented, so the Chinese boy and I set off together. He was only a little chap, but he was not afraid to go with me and together we entered the woods. The trees were very thick, there was no moon and it was pitch dark. Brushwood and fallen trees made it difficult to walk but after a few minutes we struck a footpath which led up the mountain side to a little plateau. Here was an open space where a lot of trees had been cut down. We hunted round a bit and then came upon a clue—some old newspapers in which our things had been wrapped."

September 27th, 1915.

"You will rejoice to hear that we recovered practically all our stolen things. When we found the old newspapers I knew that the thieves could not be far off so the Chinese boy and I skipped about, shouting from different angles and throwing stones in all directions, to make them think there was a whole band of people after them. I

was for plunging into the woods, but Mr. Hunter held me back and would not hear of me pursuing in the dark. I was so mad at the thought of them making off with all our things, specially the tent and the batch of scones, that I could scarcely wait for daybreak. At dawn, however, we set out to explore further and after a while I picked up a murderous looking knife, then the boy found a cap caught in the branch of a tree, then more newspaper and finally, lying in a grassy glade between the trees, were all the stolen goods.

"We collected them and carried them back to the camp but I determined, if possible, to catch the thief, so later on I went a wee bit up the valley to see whether the Hassa tent was still standing. It was there all right, and so were the three men.

"As soon as he saw me, one of them began to crouch behind some bushes as though he was trying to sneak away, but I slipped round and intercepted him, so he came out and gave me a 'Salaam' (Peace be to you) and I answered 'Peace be to you,' adding 'You scoundrel' under my breath. Then I said in Chinese, 'Come with me, I have something to say to you.' He could not understand but guessed all was not quite straight, then I seized his arm and said, 'Come on, none of your shinmaiking, we've got you this time.' He was white with rage and fear and began to hang

back. As there were three of them, I knew I could not manage by myself, so I called out for Mr. Hunter and as soon as I yelled, the other Hassa jumped on his horse and galloped off. I still called out for Mr. Hunter, but he was too far off round the corner of the valley, and I had, reluctantly, to let my man go.

"Later, Mr. Hunter and the Turki went off to interview the Hassa while I stopped to look after the things. When Mr. Hunter got in sight of the tent there were two Hassas still there, and as soon as they saw him one of them ran into the tent and came out with a gun threatening to shoot anybody that laid hands on him. Mr. Hunter said, 'There need not be any shooting if you come over here and talk the matter over.' The man declared he knew nothing about it, and as there was no direct evidence against them there was nothing to be done. Shortly afterwards one of the Hassa Elders came along and we reported the matter to him. He said, 'I must go and investigate and I will come back shortly.' We waited an hour but he never returned, so there was nothing for it but to pack up our things and go. Our way lay close by the Hassa tent, but by the time we got there they had taken it down and were getting away as quickly as possible.

"We continued our journey up the valley for several miles until all at once it opened out into a

magnificent amphitheatre—a circular valley several miles in diameter and surrounded on all sides by high mountains. A stream ran down the centre and, scattered about, were hundreds of tents, with thousands of Hassas riding backwards and forwards, paying friendly visits or herding cattle, sheep, horses and camels. We wondered whether to stop for the weekend, but decided to push on. We crossed the valley and began a stiff climb over the mountain pass. We were all breathless by the time we reached the top, in fact Mr. Hunter's pony had to lie down and rest. From here we looked round and took our bearings. Behind, the Bogdo towered up into the clouds, on our right was another range called the Further Mountains which were white to the base with fresh snow. We now understood why there were so many Hassas in the valley—snow had driven them out of the hills. We intended to visit a town in the Further Mountains, called Karashar, but had gone too far West, so decided to make for Turfan which lies below sea level. We set off down hill and before long came to Hassa herdsmen. We got them to milk a couple of sheep and were soon enjoying a good drink of fresh milk. We came out of the mountains into a broad stony valley and on the far side we could see shepherds' tents. We decided to go across and pitch beside them where we were sure of water and grass, and before

long we were busy choosing a good place and pitching our tent.

"Some Turki shepherds came alongside, and Mr. Hunter entertained them while I straightened up the things. He asked if they had mutton for sale and one man brought along some sheep shanks. There was not very much meat sticking to them; however, we put them in our pot and made some tasty mutton broth which we enjoyed immensely, as we had had nothing for dinner except dry bread which we munched while riding along. By this time it was getting dark, so we shackled our animals and fastened them down for the night. The shepherds warned us to keep a good look out as much thieving went on, and I heard them asking our boy whether we had a gun. Of course we have none at all, but I heard him answer that we had a very big one, so big that, from the description, they must have thought it was a cannon."

Urumbchi.

January 6th, 1916.

"Did I tell you how our New Year came in? I was sitting up reading my diary when, exactly at midnight, the walls began to sway, the ceiling cracked, the doors swung open and the pots rattled. It was an earthquake. Mr. Hunter was sleeping upstairs, but I soon heard him rushing downstairs and calling out: 'Did you feel that?'

'Yes,' I answered. 'What time do you make it?' 'Exactly twelve o'clock,' he replied. Was it not strange? Next morning we checked our clock by the sun and found that, as near as we could judge, the earthquake took place at two minutes past twelve. Was it not a nice way to let the New Year in?

"You will notice that the stamps which I now use have five Chinese characters printed down the centre. The meaning of these characters is 'Limited to the use of Sinkiang province,' and the reason is that people have been buying large quantities of stamps and sending them to the coast as a means of transferring money, because the exchange on silver is so very high. It sounds strange, but stamps are very cheap in this place, and one can make a lot of money through buying them here and selling them elsewhere, so the government has adopted this means to prevent traffic in stamps, and profit being made on them."

Urumchi.

February 6th, 1916.

"Our Governor is a Yunnan man. He stands with Yuan Shi Kai, but he is not a man of much principle. When the Republicans were in power he was Republican, now Yuan is in power he is Monarchist. Just when the Monarchy movement was being raised, he conferred with a young Hupeh man of Republican views who, thinking the

Governor was trusting him, gave him his confidence and expressed the idea that Monarchy would be bad for the country. The Governor then asked him to put his views in writing, which he foolishly did, and the Governor immediately telegraphed them to Peking. The answer came, 'Shoot him.' The Governor then invited the young fellow to his garden and they drank wine together, the poor chap quite pleased with himself and thinking he was getting on so well. Presently the Governor excused himself for a minute and gave the word of command to soldiers waiting outside, who went in and shot him in cold blood. It was murder, and I will never go near him again.

"Elections took place recently and, of course, they were unanimous for Yuan Shi Kai. I asked a voter what would have happened if anyone had voted differently, and he said, 'He would have been shot.'

"A fortnight ago an official reported a plot for a rebellion to take place at the Chinese New Year; however, nothing happened, so the man was put to death for handing in false reports. Since then, the Governor has been censoring all letters and is supposed to have discovered a plot against his own life, involving most of the Yunnan officials. He has enlisted many new soldiers and strict precautions are being taken, as the plot was supposed to be laid for the 15th of the first moon, which is a feast day.

On the 14th, the Governor gave a feast in honour of an Inspector who had recently arrived, and invited the two suspected men.

"While the guests were enjoying themselves the Governor left the table and gave a pre-arranged signal at which some soldiers entered the dining hall and cut one of the men down in cold blood. The Governor then returned, saying: 'Do not disturb yourselves, gentlemen, let us go on with the feast.' They did so, with the bleeding corpse lying there. Later, he gave another signal and the soldiers fell on the other man, who was somewhat prepared and made a desperate resistance, upsetting the table, but twenty men slashed at him and he was cut down.

"When all was over the Governor begged the guests' pardon and said he was obliged to carry out the proceeding in this way as these were desperate men, and he could not afford to run risks. Meanwhile soldiers arrested six smaller officials and put them in the black dungeon, a dark hole, underground, cold and without any sanitary conveniences. This incident put an end to all festivities.

"Mr. Hunter and I were taking a walk the other day and saw a strange sight. Six men in two big wooden *cangues*, three men in each. Just then the Governor's wife came driving along in her carriage, and the soldiers made the men all kneel down until she had driven past."

Urumchi.

April 12th, 1916.

"To-day we had our first shower of rain for six months, but we have had plenty of snow to make up for it. This time the rain only lasted one hour, then it turned into very thick snow. The result is a fearful mixture of slush and mud in the streets. People walk in long lines, each following in the footsteps of the other. It is surprising how quickly a narrow path is trodden in this way. The Chinese are very good at picking their way through the mud, and it is wonderful how clean they keep their cloth shoes and white socks. We cannot cross the street where we please, but must walk along until we come to a place where some enterprising shopkeeper has put down a few stepping-stones, not for the benefit of the people, but to draw customers by his door. The poor horses have a rough time when the carts stick in the mud. It is quite common to see three or four horses pulling away at a cart and a lot of men using long poles as levers, or with picks and shovels, trying to get carts out of holes several feet deep. Donkeys are sometimes drowned in the streets; they get into a hole, fall under their heavy load and cannot rise up again. Carters sometimes belabour the animals most unmercifully; the other day I saw one with a stick almost as thick as your arm, laying it on to

the horse as hard as he could. I slipped up behind him and just as he was going to bring the stick down again I caught hold of it from behind, and before he knew what had happened I had it wrenched out of his hand. I felt like laying it across his back, but only scolded him and walked off with it. He was a strong coalman and big enough to eat me, but he took it meekly and later on came to apologise and ask for the stick back. As it was used to support the cart and take the strain off the horse's back while unloading coal, I knew if I did not give it him, the poor horse would suffer, so on his promising not to beat the animal any more, I handed the stick back to him.

"Yesterday I saw a man being driven along the streets in a large wooden cage placed on a four-wheeled cart. He was wearing heavy iron shackles and had come fourteen days' journey. He was being taken to the Magistrate's Yamen, and was evidently an important prisoner, probably political. The cage was made of wood, about 3 ft. high and 4 ft. long. At the Yamen door I saw another cage, about 6 ft. high and 2 ft. square. Perhaps it was prepared for him, if so, he would have to stand up day and night, which would be a terrible punishment. There have been many people going about the streets these days, wearing large wooden collars weighing about 50 or 60 lbs. This treatment is bad enough, but

mild compared with confinement in a straight cage."

Urumchi.

May 12th, 1916.

"We had a visit from a thief recently. It is not often they get the better of me, but this one did. We had just finished Sunday service when our boy came along and called me to come out. I could hear a man saying: 'It is all right; I know Mr. Ma.'

"Sure enough I recognised him as a man who had been here twice. Once he brought a watch for sale, which I guessed to be a stolen one, and so would have nothing to do with it. Our boy said he was sitting quietly in his room when this man came along the roof and dropped into our yard. I questioned the man and he said a party of them had been gambling next door when the police came on the scene and they all scattered. Hearing this, I thought I had better get clear of him as soon as possible, so I opened the door and let him go, but when Mr. Hunter came along, he said: 'That man was a thief; you should have detained him.' A little later we heard a fat Tientsin man who lives on the other side of us, shouting and making a row. He and his family had been to a wedding, and while they were away, someone had broken into the house and ransacked the place.

To think I had the thief in my hands and let him escape ! Later I spent a few hours walking round the town looking for him, and if I could have met him, he would have had a rough time."

Urumchi.

August 21st, 1916.

"Our Chapel was badly in need of repairs. The front wall was only a wooden partition with paper windows, and sometimes when preaching we could hardly hear our own voices, for the people outside shouting their wares, as they hawked them about. They all deposited their baskets near our place, and bawled as loudly as they could the excellence of their wares, and as there was only a thickness of paper between us and them it was not always pleasant. Sometimes a member of the congregation would get up and go out to buy, and you could hear quite a debate going on until they settled on the price, then the man would come back chewing away at something he had bought, and settle down to enjoy his lunch and the sermon at the same time.

"We took out the wooden partition and paper windows and built up a mud brick wall with windows opening into our yard, and it is a great improvement. Crowds of people watched us and asked all kinds of questions. One of the workmen evidently got tired of telling what we were going to do, and invented as an answer: 'They are

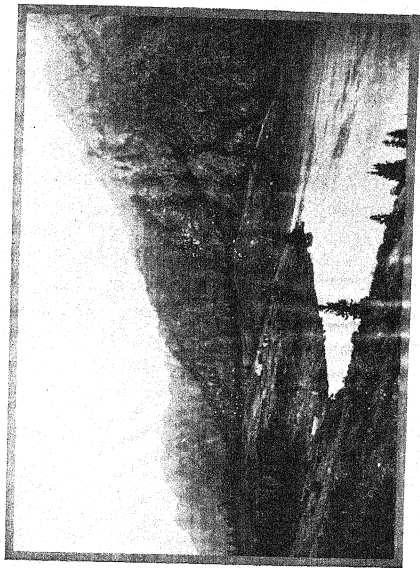
opening a pawnshop.' Later on someone called to ask if it was true that we were about to open a pawnshop, then another man was told that we were opening a watchmaker's shop. Later on a Yamen Official sent round to say that *he* had heard we were returning to England, and if so, he would send his men to seal up the windows and doors and safeguard the property. So the stories 'go round.'

Urumchi.

October 10th, 1916.

"A Living Buddha came to see us recently. He is a wealthy man and drives about the city in a four-wheeled carriage, dressed in rich furs. He seems to be very intelligent and is quite friendly. He is staying in a private house not far off, and last Sunday afternoon Mr. Hunter and I returned his visit. He received us very graciously, and while we were there, a Chinese gentleman brought in a little boy. He apologised for intruding, but explained that this child was always ailing. Would the Living Buddha kindly stroke him on the head? The Buddha glanced at us as though somewhat ashamed, and Mr. Hunter wanted to leave, but I said: 'No, let us stop and watch the performance.'

"He then asked: 'What Buddha do you worship?' and the Chinese replied: 'Oh, any Buddha at all.' 'Have you a Buddha in your



THE BOGDO MOUNTAIN NEAR URUMCHI, KNOWN TO MONGOLS AS
THE MOUNT OF GOD

house?' was the next question. 'No,' was the answer. 'Then you must get one and commit your child to his keeping.' As he talked, the Living Buddha was nibbling some dried fruits, and the Chinese asked if he would kindly give the child a small piece of the fruit he was eating, to act as a charm. He did so, and the Chinese retired, but not before he had told the baby boy to give the Buddha a bow.

"Please ask friends to pray for the Mongols of Sinkiang, many thousands of them without hope, without God and without a preacher."

Urumchi.

December 18th, 1916.

"Another week, then Christmas, but there is nothing to remind one of the festive season here. We have not much prospect of a turkey, in fact, we are living very sparingly these days. Though we have money in Tientsin, the exchange is very bad just now, and we are holding out as long as we can in hopes that it will improve, so we are on short rations. However, our happiness does not consist in eating and drinking, or we might be miserable. 'The Lord is our portion,' and we are happy and contented.

"Yesterday I saw an old Moslem dying on the street from heart failure. He had friends trying to look after him, and I offered one of them money

to buy the old man some stimulant, but they would not take it, as a Mohammedan must not enter the presence of his Maker with the smell of wine on his lips. The friend said: 'It does not matter if he dies, so long as he does not take wine, but should he drink wine and die, the consequence would be too terrible to think about.' "

Urumchi.

January 22nd, 1917.

"We have been extra busy these past two days. There has been a fairly heavy fall of snow and it has taken two days to clear it up. I hoped to write last night, but after a whole day of sweeping snow and a whole evening of washing clothes, I was too tired. This is bath night, and while the water is heating, I will scribble a few lines.

"The Mongols have been bringing me a number of presents lately—milk, butter, eggs, a pet lamb and last of all, a young golden eagle. It only just has its feathers, but is very big already and its claws are as sharp as needles. One has to be very careful in handling it. Unfortunately it eats as much flesh in a week as I do in a year, so I cannot afford to rear it, and have passed it on to a friend who is better off than I am. The Qazaqs use these eagles for hunting hares, foxes and gazelles.

"The other day a Sart called for treatment. He had been out gathering firewood not far from the

city when a wolf attacked him, but this time caught a Tatar. The man must have been strong, for he seized the wolf by both ears and hung on for dear life until a friend came along with an axe and dispatched it, but the poor Sart's forearms were badly bitten."

Urumchi.

February 18th, 1917.

"On the boat coming to China a fellow passenger let me use his prismatic glasses, and ever since I have longed for a pair of my own. A postal Commissioner here had a pair, but when I asked the price I found they had cost him twenty guineas, so my chance of ever owning any seemed more remote than ever.

"Recently I saw a pair of glasses hanging up for sale at a Russian shop. They were excellent prismatics, of the latest pattern and made by a French firm. Even the leather case had scarcely a scratch on it. They had been sold by a Russian refugee, and the price was only forty paper taels (30/- English money at present rate), dirt cheap. However, we had not the money to spare and I had to leave them.

"One month later I suddenly thought of a plan. A traveller left some of his clothes with me and they included a swallow tail coat and some white waistcoats for evening wear which would

never be a bit of good to me. Once before I had tried to sell them, but could get nothing for them as the Turki and Chinese wear nothing of the kind. It now struck me that this Russian shop which does business with Russians and Tatars, might take them in exchange for the glasses. I told Mr. Hunter of my idea, but he laughed and was very doubtful of the result. However, I went off with the bundle on my shoulder, and, to my delight, found that the glasses were still unsold.

"I spread out the garments on the counter and made my offer. The merchants turned them over and over, pointing out all the defects and disparaging them as much as possible. I merely said, 'One word only. Do you buy or don't you buy?' and they said: 'We buy, but what do you want for them?'

"There is nothing like aiming high, so I said: 'Give me those glasses with twenty taels in money, and you can have the clothes.' We bargained for some time and they finally agreed to give me the prismatic and two pairs of blue spectacles in exchange for my dress suit.

"I came away the happiest fellow in Urumchi and hurried back to show the glasses to Mr. Hunter. Of course he wanted to know how much I had given besides the clothes, and was astounded when I showed him the two pairs of blue spectacles which were thrown in, over and above."

Urumchi.

March 29th, 1917.

“To-day the weather is beautifully mild and quite warm, so that by 12 o’clock it is like a summer day. This morning I saw a spider and a butterfly, the first this year. The butterfly was red and yellow like the ‘French drummers’ as we used to call them at home; the flies also are beginning to put in an appearance.

“Last Wednesday I saw a kite circling round and round looking for its dinner. They are very common here and some of them are very big, almost like eagles. This place is evidently too cold for them in winter so they go further south, but they are coming back again now. They soar remarkably, circling round and round without any apparent effort, and are sometimes lost to sight. Coming up the road I noticed that the men who sold bread, put branches of thorns about their stalls to prevent these birds swooping and carrying off the loaves. If one threw a crust into the air, the birds would swoop down and catch it before it fell to the ground, and when a man is carrying a piece of meat home for dinner, he has to be careful or the kite will snatch it right out of his hand. One day I saw a man eating a piece of bread, when suddenly one of these birds swooped down from behind and snatched it away between his hand and

his mouth. I could not have believed it had I not seen it for myself."

The years of the Great European War brought changes even to Central Asia, and the immediate result of the Russian Revolution was a large influx of refugees pouring over the Siberian frontier into Turkestan and reaching Urumchi often in a condition of utter destitution. These White Russians formed large colonies in various parts of the country but the main stream flowed on to China proper, the Chinese officials showing themselves full of human kindness and giving travelling facilities to the unfortunate people on their terrible journeyings which lasted many months. To the missionary a troublesome result of world upset was the tightening up of frontier regulations and the introduction of endless difficulties relating to passport and travel restrictions. There were to be no more excursions into the Ural Mountains for Mr. Hunter, and before long Outer Mongolia also was closed to him.

The introduction of a strict censorship on all letters, considered necessary in view of suspected political intrigues among the mixed population of the province, came hard on the missionary, and from this time Percy Mather's letters are written more guardedly. This censorship never relaxed, and things came to such a pass that he said to

the writers one day: "I have just torn up for the third time, a home letter I was writing. All freedom has gone and I can now write nothing intimate. I just say I am well and then talk about the weather. Even a family joke might be misinterpreted." He also constantly urged friends in England to refrain from comments on any political subject, knowing that innocent remarks in letters might easily involve the missionaries in real danger. Every restaurant, tea-shop and place of public assembly in Urumchi, showed an announcement warning customers that the discussion of politics was forbidden, and Mr. Hunter, the canny Aberdonian, used this restriction to save himself many a troublesome explanation. He would even reply to the simple enquiry "What is your nationality?" with a gesture towards the card which declared: "The discussion of national matters is forbidden."

The two men spent the years until 1926 in prolonged missionary journeys alternating with intensive language study and translation work. The cold, dark, northern winter was unsuited to travel, but gave opportunity for every kind of bookwork. The hours of daylight were claimed by all and sundry who stood in need of help, but at sunset the gun was fired which announced that the city gate was closed for the night. After that things were quieter and at five o'clock the simple meal of rice, sorgum syrup, tea and bread was

served, and when this was over they settled down to a night of work. There was patient plodding study to be done, Scriptures to be translated, manuscripts to be transcribed, then, with the help of a mimeograph, the sheets were duplicated, sorted, assembled, stitched and stacked ready for distribution during the summer months. The work involved by this hand process was exceedingly heavy, and it was immense relief when the British and Foreign Bible Society came to their assistance and took over the printing and binding of the manuscripts. No missionaries have ever been more grateful to this great Society than were Hunter and Mather when the first parcels of books arrived, and they knew that an unlimited supply was at their disposal.

Among the trophies of the war which percolated into Central Asia was a little cart of peculiar type. It was intended for battlefield use to carry small quantities of ammunition easily and rapidly to the front line of gunners, and was light but beautifully built. One day this little British cart was put up for sale in Urumchi and George Hunter bought it and fitted it up as a one man travel cart. He harnessed his strong Russian horses to it, and, with its help covered and re-covered the ground from Kashgar to Kobdo and from Hami to Chuguchak.

Each spring, as soon as climatic conditions made travel possible, the men started on long treks.

They always knew the direction of their proposed journey but tied themselves to no detail of plan, for they became experienced pioneers, and an experienced pioneer does not publish programmes but unobtrusively gets ahead with his work.

One summer they journeyed to the Altai, another summer to Ili, yet another to Chuguchak with occasional trips to Karashar, Turfan and the South Road, or eastward to Kucheng and Muhleiho. Thus these intrepid pioneers opened the way to every part of Dzungaria and made the way comparatively easy for those who should follow. Like clearers in the forest they hacked away the stouter trees and though young shoots still grew up, the work of blazing the trail was accomplished.

Santai.

June 10th, 1918.

"I have been out on a journey eastward visiting some Christians and preaching the Gospel in the towns and villages by the way. I have been away for over a month now. When passing one small stage a Mongol came to the inn and asked me for eye medicine. I gave it him, and he told us that he was an officer in the guard of a Mongol Prince whose headquarters were 15 miles away. He invited us to his house, and said that if we came he would take us to visit the Prince. I promised to try and call on our way back.

"We found the Christians bright and cheery, clean and tidy, and spent three happy days with them, then left for Kucheng, 'Ancient City', where we spent three busy days preaching and book-selling, and visiting every shop. It would take too long to tell of the different receptions we had. Some merchants were quite friendly, others scowling and suspicious, others again were very rude.

"On our return journey we met a Mongol, who enquired whether we were the people who gave eye medicine to his friend. We said we were, and he told us that his friend was much better, and wanted to know if we would visit him. Accordingly last Thursday we set off for the mountains but decided to call and see the Prince first, so followed a stream through stony ravines for about 20 miles, when we met two Mongols, who said we had missed the camp and directed us back to where the streams parted. Here we overtook a young Lama, who led the way to the Prince's encampment which was on a flat plain in the bed of the river. The river-bed was fertile and wooded but was surrounded with bare sandstone mountains. The Prince had a two-storied mud palace, and in his court we pitched our tents. To the north was another small two-storied mud building for the Living Buddha and further out still were two idol shrine-tents, and one tent for worship surrounded by a cluster of 20-30 tents all used by

priests ; in fact, this is a kind of lamasery, and apart from one old lady, who is a relative of the Prince and Princess, no women are allowed, so you can imagine what a peaceful spot we have found !

“ The priests have planted oats round the tents, and a few yards away is a stream which comes from the eternal snows. Trees line its banks and in the trees all kinds of sweet singing birds have their nests.

“ The young Lama led us along to the tent of the man we had previously met. He received us most gladly, and gave us tea. I am afraid you would not enjoy it, as it is flavoured with butter and salt.

“ Another Lama went to report our presence to the Prince, who sent word that he would receive us next morning. The priests were all very kind and several of them invited me to food and gave me presents of silk scarfs as a mark of honour.

“ I have to stop at this point, as the lady of the tent has just brought some butter scones, some cheese and a basin of hot milk *without* any salt in it. By the way the women of this tribe are called *buskwa*, or ‘ the one without a belt ’, from their custom of wearing loose flowing gowns while the men are belted.

“ I suppose all this sounds very bright and cheerful, but now let me change the scene. The

sun is setting, there is a great blowing of the twelve-foot long trumpets, ringing of bells, beating of drums and chanting of prayers. As I lie awake I begin to feel something of the power of these priests and to realise what the Gospel has to overcome. Though not doubting its power one realises what a serious task it is to preach to these priest-ridden, superstitious, yet lovable folk. While I was thinking these things my heart was cheered by a burst of melodious music—nightingales singing in the bushes only a few yards away. Singing sweetly and cheerfully even in the dark, and a song of gratitude and praise went up from my heart, and I took courage, knowing the Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation to *everyone* that believeth, Mongols included. So I went off to sleep with the song of the nightingale ringing in my ears. I woke up several times during that night, and each time I heard the nightingale.

Urumchi.

June 25th, 1918.

“Travelling home I nearly left my boy in ‘Ancient City’. He is not very straight and I have often suspected him of gambling. One night he came in late, quite pleased with himself, and said he had met an old friend who gave him 8/- as a present. I said nothing, but guessed he had won it gambling. Evidently his luck changed, and

soon he came to borrow money to buy clothes. I paid him up to date but refused to give him any more. He begged for 2/-, then 1/-, then 6d, but I absolutely refused to give him a cash. Next thing I noticed was that he had pawned some of his clothes and bedding. Then I caught him having a confidential talk with the stable boy who gives out straw and provender, and I guessed at once that he was trying to get the man to cheat over the account. As I went to bed I saw my boy waken up the stable boy and tell him to reckon the account with me, as we were leaving early next morning. The man, however, was very simple and called out the full amount of the bill as soon as he entered the room. I said, 'Right you are, I'll reckon with you in the morning.' The reason for the haste was that my boy was wanting money for gambling, or to redeem his bedding, and thought to make it out of me by charging for grain which the horses had never had. The next morning I tackled the stable boy when his master was at hand and said, 'Now what have you two men been up to?' He confessed at once, and said 'Oh, Teacher, forgive me and I'll tell you the whole truth.' Then he admitted that my man had persuaded him to charge me for food the animals had never had, in fact he had put them on half rations. Just as he was confessing, my boy ran up calling out, 'Don't give me away,' but he was

too late. Didn't I just talk to him. Not only was I mad at him trying to do me, but I was worse vexed at the animals having been deprived of their food. I took out money and paid him off right away, but, of course, some people came round to plead for him, saying he would be stranded if I dismissed him, so I relented, and you can imagine how humbly and quietly he came back.

"One morning I was a bit tired, so lay in bed and tried to get some extra sleep, but a crowd of kiddies, Chinese, Turki and Tungan came hammering at my door wanting to buy books. I called out: 'Go away and play. Come again later on and I'll give you some.' But no, they wanted them right away. They gave me all kinds of titles, from 'Foreign Devil' upwards. They climbed up at my window, peeped through the wooden bars, and began to pass all kind of remarks. 'There he is,' 'Now he's getting up,' 'He's turning over,' 'He's getting dressed, he'll soon be here,' etc. Sometimes the bigger ones would lift a smaller one up, then run away and leave him hanging there screaming, afraid lest the foreigner should catch and eat him. I was mad at them but could not help laughing.

"Roads are busy and inns crowded so there has been little rest. Once only did we secure a quiet night. The cart horses generally have bells fastened to their halters, so that an incessant

ringing goes on all night; moreover the carters do not fasten up their horses, and as soon as they have finished their own feed they wander about the inn yard trying to steal from the other beasts, so they kick and squeal all night. Well, that night, as I was going off to bed I noticed that only one horse had a bell, though it was a very big loud-toned one, so I said to my boy, 'Just you slip out and stuff that bell full of paper.' He was afraid to do so and said that perhaps the owner would see him and think he was trying to steal the bell. I said, 'No matter what the owner thinks. I'll do it,' so I got a piece of soft Chinese paper and stuffed the bell tight so there was silence for the rest of the night. I got up in the early hours of the morning and had a look round, and every horse in the inn was stretched out full length, sleeping peacefully. Next day we passed the horse on the road, and its bell was still quite dumb. My boy and I had a good laugh together over it.

"Next night I did not get a wink of sleep, for our room was swarming with B flats. I have now got all my things spread about the yard giving them a good airing. It is nice to be back into clean rooms once again.

"I'm still hungering for a letter from you—your last was dated seven months ago."

*Altai.**June 30th, 1920.*

"We are about six hundred miles north of Urumchi near the little town of Altai. Altai is a Mongol word which means 'gold,' and most of the gold used in this province is found and washed here. There is also a large district in Russia called Altai, and at one time it all belonged to the Mongols. They also call this town Shara Sumi (Yellow Temple) but you will find it marked Tulta on some maps.

"I have not yet been into the town but Mr. Hunter went yesterday to report our presence to the officials. We had to report at three places en route, regulations being now very strict on account of the Bolsheviks. Altai is situated on the east bank of the River Kran which joins the Irtysh thirty miles from here. We camped on the banks of the Irtysh last weekend; it is a fine, broad, stately river but swarming with mosquitoes and horse-flies. As I looked at it flowing along towards Siberia and the Arctic Ocean I thought if only we had a boat and George to act as skipper, we would sail right home to dear old Fleetwood.

"Some Qazaqs ferried us across. They did not know much about boats and as there was a stiff breeze and a strong current we soon began to drift, so of course I had to lend a hand, much to the

amazement of the Qazaqs and of our Turki servant, who exclaimed I must be a professional. In fording the rivers we look for a wide place where one of us goes over with a rope and steadies the beasts across. It is pretty exciting, especially when the animal carrying your three weeks' store of flour and rice is crossing in the water ; you feel like giving him a good pat and a lump of sugar if he gets safely over.

"We are camping in a hollow surrounded by high mountains, beautifully cool with good grass for the horses. We passed two large lakes on the way here, I should think they would be about 100 miles in circumference. There was plenty of fish in them, but the water was not good, it was salt and brackish and so the more we drank the more thirsty we became. We rode for about eight hours alongside one of the lakes, the north end was very fine with rocky bays and mountains, but for me there was something lacking to complete the picture, not a sail to be seen, but there were thousands of water birds, ducks, herons, storks, geese, and we saw an eagle pluming itself.

"We have moved on to Kobdo, a town of Outer Mongolia, and are encamped on the banks of the Bujunti, about a mile from the town. Although we are about 4500 ft. above sea level, yet it is very hot at midday, and at night the mosquitoes are

exceedingly troublesome. This province is a vast land of mountains, rivers and lakes. The latter have provided us with many good meals of fish.

"The town is not large, but very busy. Mongols and Qazaqs ride backwards and forwards, bringing in wool and hides, and carrying away tea and cloth. There are about 150 Chinese here and 200-300 Russians. Yesterday was Sunday and what with the fair-haired children playing, couples promenading and the young Russian men lounging about, it reminded me of Fleetwood Esplanade on a Sunday afternoon.

"We have had a really good time among the Mongols ; they have bought the Gospels so readily that we are now sold out. We have journeyed over a thousand miles so far, but must return home before very long as the passes soon get snowbound here.

"There are no trees in this district except for a few round the town which are carefully preserved, so we have to use horse and cow dung for firing. It burns splendidly when dry and gives out quite a lot of heat. I advise you to try it during the next coal famine.

"These Mongols rear yaks in large quantities ; they are strange shaggy beasts, like cows with curtains hanging round them and a huge woolly tail which they use very freely. They do not *moo* like a cow, but grunt like pigs.

"The road between Altai and Kobdo was very good, and there was only one stage without water. As we drew near to Kobdo the river became very deep and we had to make a wide *détour* in the mountains to avoid it, so that in two days we only made about 5 miles real progress. On the first day we landed at the top of a high snow mountain. We were past grass line, so the poor horses had to feed on moss. We too had to go supperless, and next morning breakfastless, as there was no fuel at all. However, that afternoon, we met some Qazaqs and exchanged a few Gospels for a big leg of mutton, then we found a bed of fine mushrooms, some wild onions and splendid wild rhubarb. Next day was Sunday, so you can imagine what a feast we had. Such is our life, one day famine, the next day plenty."

Urumchi.

September 29th, 1920.

"Home letters are rare and precious these days; however, we remind ourselves that 'no news is good news' and trust that you are all well and happy. We have been back about 10 days. During our journey we travelled over 2000 miles, moving in localities where, as far as we know, no other missionary has ever been. We scattered Gospels among different tribes of Mongols and Qazaqs. I don't know whether you can pronounce

the latter word yet. 'Q' is a guttural 'K.' As this is the first opportunity that many have had to receive the Gospel I like to picture them this winter, sitting in their tents reading and pondering the strange message that has come to them. Pray that God may by His Spirit enlighten their dark hearts and bring them to a knowledge of Himself through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"It may be some years yet before I take a furlough, although it is now due. The only sacrifice will be not seeing you dear ones ; but the time is short, the days are evil and thousands perish who have never even heard the Name of Jesus. Sacrifice seems small compared with what our boys have done in France."

Urumchi.

May 31st, 1922.

"I am back again after being away for three weeks in a N.E. direction. The journey out was not easy. Heavy rain delayed us in starting. I took a young Christian boy who was converted from Mohammedanism with me and though he did not know anything about horses he was a great help in selling books and in preaching.

"We only did a short stage of fourteen miles on the first day as the roads were very muddy and as soon as we arrived the boy asked to help in selling gospels. Very soon he was meeting the

full contempt and scorn of the Moslems, many of whom knew him. He was not the least afraid or ashamed and went out among them quite boldly.

"Next morning we were up at 3 a.m. and left about 5.30 a.m. on a thirty mile stage. Next day off again early and went thirty miles to 'Soft Mud Spring.' The road was very bad and the 'soft mud' had been spread all over it. We arrived at 4.30 p.m. to find all inns filled with soldiers and though we tried to get lodgings in a farm, the farmers were too much afraid to dare to take in strangers, so I decided to push on fourteen miles to next half-way stage. We luckily found a patch of grass where the horses got a good feed, while we regaled ourselves on dry bread. We got in at 9.30 p.m. to find the inn burnt out and no help but for us to go on another sixteen miles. By this time it was blowing and raining but we got in at one o'clock on Sunday morning.

"My boy had been sleeping on his horse and through leaning on the front of the saddle had galled the horse's back a little, so we were glad to rest until Monday. There was no chance for me to sleep as I was leading and it took me all my time to find the way.

"On Sunday morning the innkeeper's little boy came along to watch me shave. I was using Colgate's shaving soap and when the child picked

up the piece of paper on which I wiped my razor, he said : 'Why, your whiskers are quite scenty !' ”

“ At Muh-lei-ho we were heartily welcomed by two Christian brothers who live there and also by a Christian soldier who has now secured his discharge from the army. It was most encouraging to see them witnessing faithfully for God. They closed the shop on Sunday and I noticed that they had decorated the shutters with hymns and texts of Scripture instead of the usual quotations from Chinese classics.

“ We found a fresh supply of gospels at the Post Office and had some busy days bookselling and preaching. My boy lived here for several years, in fact, it was here that I first met him six years ago. He was but a child then but bought some gospels and tracts from me and was constantly coming to have them explained to him. When we reached the town he said : 'I must go and visit the old Mosque where I was a student and bear witness for God in that place.' He did so and met with a great deal of scorn and ridicule. One man reviled him by using an Arabic word which means 'Forgotten of God,' but he turned and replied : 'No, I am not forgotten. God remembers even the sparrows, and He will not forget me.' ”

Tahcheng (also called Tarabaghatai, Chuguchak, Beh Ya [Sea-gull]).

August 4th, 1922.

"Wherever is this place with the four-barrelled name? It lies 20 days journey north-west of Urumchi on the Siberian border. The first name is used by the Chinese Post Office, the second by the Mongol, the third by the Russians and the fourth is colloquial Chinese. There are two cities and two suburbs all close together. In the old Manchu city is the Governor's Yamen, the Telegraph Office and the Barracks. The Chinese are not keeping it in repair and it is fast going to ruin. In the Chinese city are many official residences and a few shops. The suburbs are busy, and thronged with a mixed multitude of Chinese from every province, Sarts, Tatars or Noghais, Manchus, both Solons and Shibas, Tungans, Russians of every variety, Cossacks, Qazaqs, a few Poles and Finns, and strangest of all, one British subject. Born of English parents in St. Petersburg he has spent most of his life in Russia. He lost all his property through the Revolution; his wife, a Russian lady, was killed and he was imprisoned. He was very glad to see us and to get an English newspaper, not having seen one for four years.

"Among the Russians here are Tsarists, Bolsheviks and refugees. Some are in a most

pitiable condition, being reduced to beggary, while others seem quite well off and dress smartly. Nearly all the women wear short skirts, light blouses and fancy silk kerchiefs tied over the head. The men wear knee boots, baggy riding breeches, and a smock belted in at the waist, in fact some of the dandies tie themselves up quite tightly into wasp waists. It is very interesting to see all the different styles. Cloth is very expensive, so many articles of clothing such as hats, caps, waistcoats, coats and breeches are made from dyed leather. They look nice but are rather stuffy to wear in summer. Many of the Siberian women and children go without boots or stockings.

"On the way here we rescued a donkey and a sack containing 150 lbs. of flour. The donkey had fallen under its load and could not get up again. Its Turki owner was driving a herd of about fifty beasts and had not missed it. We loaded the flour on to our cart and tied the donkey behind. A few miles further on we camped by the river and found the owners. We left the matter of reward to them, so they went off next morning without even saying goodbye, and, moreover, stole two iron pegs to which we fastened our horses!"

Urumchi.

May 12th, 1923.

"I have been wanting all the week to write you

a few lines but have hardly had a moment to spare. Mr. Hunter is thinking of making a journey and so most of my time has been spent in helping him with all sorts of jobs from darning socks to squaring up accounts and correspondence, fixing a brake on the cart and repairing harness, etc., besides the usual round of patients and dispensing of medicines. I also made up a medical outfit for Mr. Hunter containing about twenty different kinds of useful drugs. A few days ago, just as we were about to sit down to breakfast, a call came for an opium case. A young woman had had a quarrel and took a big quantity of opium and also tried to poison her three children, but they had more sense and spat it out.

"I gave an emetic and the opium came up immediately, then I gave several basins of weak emetic to make sure the stomach was clean, and left, congratulating myself on getting away so quickly. After breakfast I attended to several patients and was just thinking of having a walk round to see that all was right when a man came and asked me to call and see whether the woman was out of danger. I did not like the look of things so went home again for mustard, permanganate and coffee, etc. I gave an emetic and you can imagine my dismay when another big lot of opium came up. It appears she had swallowed some of the opium in the paper without unwrapping it and when I gave the first emetic it did not come up and being wrapped in

paper there was no sign of it, but now it had dissolved and had been in the system several hours. I knew I should have a big fight to save her life and it was eight hours before I got her round and out of danger. By that time I was absolutely done up. I was hungry, but could not eat, tired, but could not rest. I went to bed, but my head was in such a whirl I could not sleep, so I saddled my pony and went out for a gallop; that helped me a good deal. You have no idea how trying these opium cases are. The house is usually packed full of friends and neighbours, shouting, quarrelling and weeping. You never heard such a din. 'Why don't you clear them all out?' I hear you ask. One reason is, it would take several people to do it and take up a lot of time and another thing is that the row helps to keep the patient awake, especially when she hears some remark that reflects upon her. She is up in arms immediately and begins either to quarrel or to weep, both of which help."

RESPITE



RESPIRE

As the years passed, Percy Mather longed more and more passionately for a sight of the home circle. It was no longer unbroken for his father had died, but mother, sister and brother remained and the memory of Fleetwood and its associations stood to him for all that was tender. It was nearly sixteen years since he left England and twelve since he came to Turkestan, but no other man had followed him and done what he himself did when he saw the need—listened to the call, responded, packed up his goods and gone forward.

He would not consider taking furlough himself if the man whom he had come to regard as a second father, were on that account left alone in Turkestan, yet he felt that his mother also had a claim on him and that he was justified in his craving to see her again. He pondered these matters, committed his way to God and things began to move.

An old friend and contemporary of Mr. Hunter's who lived in Kansu, found himself able to hand over his charge to a younger man and, being free, offered to relieve Percy Mather and take his place while he visited England. Mr. Ridley's offer was accepted and he bravely started out on the long

and difficult journey from Sining to Urumchi. Meanwhile, a letter came from three women missionaries who had been itinerating for some years in North-West Kansu, saying that they expected shortly to pass through Urumchi *en route* for Europe.

Now it was twelve years since the two men had seen a fellow-countrywoman and they prepared a royal welcome for them. Mr. Hunter travelled eighteen stages to Hami in order to meet them there and personally escort them to his home. If the two men were excited at the prospect of a visit from three compatriots, the three women were no less thrilled at the thought of meeting the two missionary pioneers whose daring adventures for Christ had provoked their admiration. Nearing Hami they heard from other wayfarers that Mr. Hunter of Urumchi was in the neighbourhood and a few days later the little ammunition cart came in sight. A tall, dignified, white-haired man dismounted and stepped forward to greet them. This was George Hunter, but they travelled yet another three weeks before they met Mather and were almost in sight of Urumchi when he came riding out to welcome them.

The first impression was that of a small, sparsely-built man, prematurely bald and grey, with the lined and disciplined face of an ascetic. His *allure* was that of a man of very acute perceptions and

almost abnormal alertness. His quick eye missed nothing and he was intensely alive to everything. His sympathy and thoughtfulness were immediately evidenced as, even before greeting the travellers, he handed a letter to one of them saying: "I know that your father is ill and this looks to me like a home letter. You will want to read it straight away." A few words were exchanged, then he and the Mongolian, Ningir, who rode with him, sprang to their saddles and dashed towards the city gate, to parley with the guard and make even the small delay of passport examination, as easy as possible.

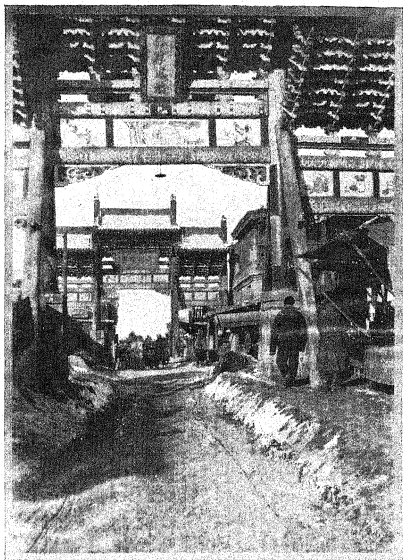
The missionary base at Urumchi was not organised for even the simplest luxuries. The compound held three small detached houses, the oldest of which was Mr. Hunter's home, and the second Mather's, whose sitting-room was the common dining-room. The third had not yet been inhabited and it housed the three women during the time of their stay.

The days that followed were intensely busy for the whole household, but specially so for Percy Mather. Passports, visas and photographs, local travel permits, money supplies, official visits, farewell calls, household arrangements in view of absence and constant demands for medical help were more than enough to fill his whole time, yet, in addition, he was obliged to spend part of each night working on the

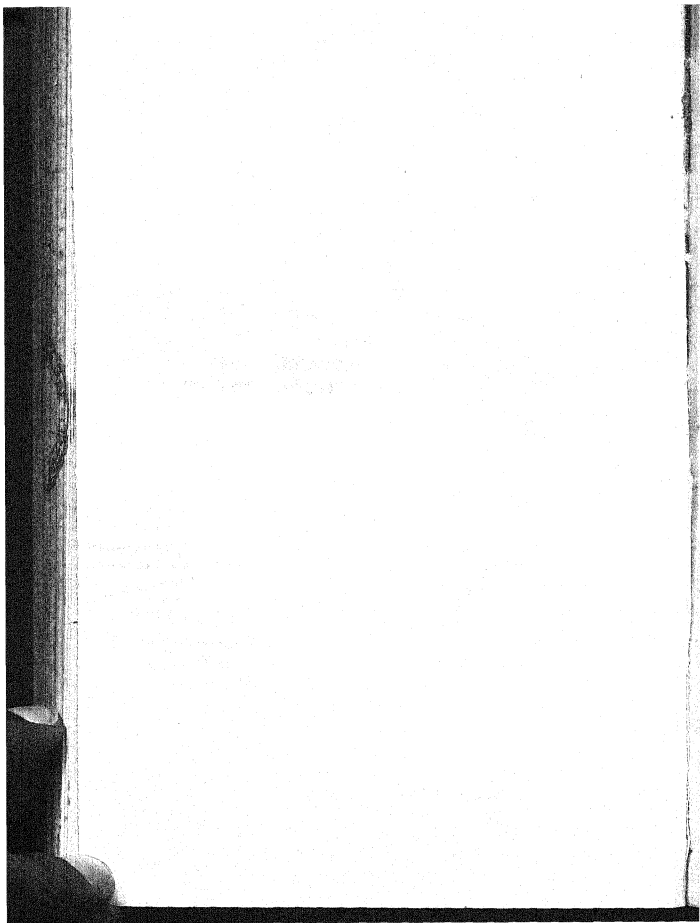
English-Mongolian dictionary, now at the point of completion, but needing to be transcribed three times over, in order to secure that if one copy were lost in transit, another could be relied on.

When the last days came the wooden clapper of the rusty door-bell never ceased its jangle, for at all hours Christian friends, Chinese officials, Turki merchants or grateful patients arrived with farewell offerings of all descriptions, till the guest-room took on the look of an Eastern department-store with its piles of red parcels containing cakes, raisins, apricots, sugar, tea or "buried eggs," not to speak of plaited melon-strips, candles and tins of fruit. At the very last moment roast fowls, ripe melons, purple grapes, luscious peaches and other perishable foods poured in, carried by solicitous friends, until one afternoon the carts were packed, and as quietly and unobtrusively as he had appeared in Urumchi, Percy Mather slipped out of the city gate and started on his homeward way.

Joy at the prospect of seeing his loved ones, his home and his beloved Fleetwood again was tempered by the pain of parting from the companion whom he had learnt to love and respect so deeply. Mr. Hunter travelled with the party right up to the Russian border, but at last the morning came when he must say good-bye, and those who witnessed the tense, controlled but overwhelmingly



MEMORIAL GATES, MAIN STREET, URUMCHI



emotional parting of the two comrade pioneers will never forget it. The three who were there understood full well how it was that, when friends at home questioned him concerning his chief, Mather was sometimes obliged to turn away lest they see the tears in his eyes.

While Mr. Hunter and the heavy-hearted Nimgir turned back on their sad journey towards Urumchi, the four travellers drove on by *tarantass* to Lake Zaisan, where they boarded a river steamer and travelled down the Irtysh. At last Mather was free from demands for help, and might rest and sleep as he would. River-steamer life was most congenial to him, and for hours he sat on the upper deck watching the sailors take the soundings and navigate the boat round awkward curves. For the first time since reaching China he enjoyed a week of complete inaction, and by the time they reached the shelter of an Omsk hotel all four missionaries were sufficiently rested to begin to thoroughly enjoy themselves. It was twelve years since Percy Mather had seen a train, an omnibus, a tram-car or a taxi, and it was through the railway-carriage window that he first saw an aeroplane. The unlimited hot water which flowed through the Omsk bath-house taps, the gay aspect of the hotel dining-room table decorations, electric lights and shining samovars, overwhelmed these Central Asian dwellers with a sense of ease and luxury. On

Sunday morning, lured by the sound of a distant bell, they sallied forth to the Orthodox Church, where, for the first time, Mather heard a Russian choir sing church music and a Russian congregation chant its creed as only Russians can. He had never dreamt of anything so perfect in artistic production and the artist soul in him responded with ecstasy to that beauty. A few days later he was in Moscow, then in Warsaw, Berlin, Brussels, and at last in London. He had been so fearful lest something intervene to prevent him carrying out his plan that he had only referred vaguely to the possibility of a near furlough when writing from Urumchi, and reached London before his family knew that he had started. Then the old love of a game mastered him and he determined to give his mother the surprise of her life by turning up unannounced. Thus he arrived back in Fleetwood as he had always dreamed he might arrive and stepped out of the station unrecognised.

He stood for one minute to take a long look at the familiar scene. "Why, if it isn't Percy Mather," said a voice at his elbow, and a girl whom he remembered as a child with a plait down her back was staring at him. Three minutes later he was in Balmoral Terrace, back in the old room and surrounded by his "dear ones," as he always called them.

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Percy Mather was blessedly free of any sense of responsibility for the Home Church, whose members, he argued, had the same Lord, the same Spirit, the same guidance and the same Book as himself, and were individually responsible towards God for their service.

He had done his work to the hilt and he was out to enjoy a holiday, but he wanted no other holiday than to be in Fleetwood. He deplored the municipal scheme which had converted the old foreshore into turfed gardens and tennis courts, but the bow window of the Balmoral Terrace sitting-room had a clear view out to sea and the sea had not changed; the shipping was still there and the pleasure of naming each craft that came in sight never palled. At home he always sat where he could watch every boat that entered the harbour or left it, and among his old schoolfellows were some who now held posts in the harbour, or were pilots, and it was sheer joy to talk with them and enter once more into the life of the seafaring population. But he was disconcertingly indifferent to social recognition and caused his mother some painful moments by leaving parties early when he was expected to stay late, and refusing invitations which he ought to have accepted.

He frankly told his friends that sight-seeing and excursions had no attractions for him compared with the pleasure he had in sitting with the family

circle round the fireside in his own home. He needed the atmosphere of intimacy in which to unfold, and domestic joys were bliss to him. Every day he walked with his sister to the school where she taught, and met her as she came out again, while his brother's training in electrical engineering was a source of perpetual interest to him.

He accepted such deputation work as was required of him by his Mission, but he was no platform man and remained so firmly convinced that the missionary vocation was a personal call, and that missionary life should only be entered on in obedience to a personal command, that he never once used the unevangelised condition of the Central Asian peoples as a lever to persuade men to volunteer. Many times he was heard to say: "I will never do anything to help a man or woman go to the mission field. It is far too heavy a burden for me to lay on anyone. If they go, the Lord must call them and open the way for them as He did for me."

He viewed missionary life as one tremendous sacrifice which he had made once, and which, with complete knowledge of all its demands, he was prepared to make again, but he did not believe himself commissioned to urge it on others.

Speaking in Bombay on his return journey to Turkestan, from the pulpit of an Anglican church, he said :

"I am not going back because I want to go. I am not even going back because of the need of the people. Travel and adventure have lost all fascination for me and my pleasure would be to stay in my own country. I am going back because I believe it to be the will of God for me, and 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God.' "

There was only one attraction which drew him from the delights of Fleetwood for any length of time, and that was connected with his love of the Mongol people. For their sakes he had determined to become, if possible, proficient in the treatment of eye diseases. To this end he applied for permission to attend the practice of the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital, and the authorities, recognising the urgency of his peculiar circumstances, as being missionary in a country which was without doctors, granted his request and gave him every facility for obtaining a working knowledge of the treatment of eye diseases. He therefore left home to find lodgings, which took the form of a cheap furnished bedroom in a working people's quarter, where he made arrangements to supply his own food and clean his own room. All he wanted was a quiet place where he could study and for the whole time he stayed there his food was brown bread, milk and fruit. Had he chosen he might have spent a good deal of time visiting friends in and around the town, but he was determined to get as much benefit

from the course as possible, so allowed nothing to interfere with steady work and in this plain room indulged the old habit of reading on into the night. The hours he spent at the hospital watching the surgeon at his work, or listening to lectures, were a great delight to him and as a student he gained the approval of his teachers.

He put in regular attendance at the out-patient and in-patient departments, making himself familiar with the symptoms of the various diseases and with their treatment, both medical and surgical. Besides this he mastered the methods of testing vision and gained a working knowledge of all that was handled in the optical department. In return for the kindness shown him he offered clerical help to the secretary, and by this means learnt something of modern methods of hospital administration. He was always the handyman everywhere and gave all kinds of help, including taking charge of babies whose mothers were being treated. In the words of a member of the staff: "He would do any blessed thing for anyone."

Thanks to the kindness of one of the honorary surgeons in giving him letters of introduction, he was also admitted on the same footing to the Dental Hospital and to the orthopædic department of the Ancoats Hospital, where he was allowed to watch the work of a well-known surgeon who devoted his attention to orthopædics and by whose kindness

he was enabled to learn the most up-to-date methods of treating fractures. Each week-end was spent in Fleetwood, where he taught a class of boys at the Wesleyan Sunday School.

It was all too brief, only a few months' course, but Mather had examined and treated many and varied cases of eye disease in Turkestan, and he was apt to learn, and quick to remember, all that his teachers desired to impart. Back in Central Asia with a good equipment of ophthalmic instruments he showed himself so clever that his reputation spread far and wide and brought him many patients.

Another of the great interests of his furlough was visiting the headquarters of the British and Foreign Bible Society and meeting some of the learned men on the staff. He gained immediate recognition from them, and the members of the committee which deals with Asian translations, when they came to question him, found that here was a man who could give a satisfactory answer to every question they asked. One of the secretaries said of him: "He was a man of no pretensions but one who knew his subject through and through, and was able to supply all the detailed information that we required."

On the other hand his deep gratitude to that Society delighted to find expression in describing to audiences the insuperable difficulties under which the pioneer missionary labours until the Scriptures

have been translated into the language in which he requires them, and in testifying to the unstinted help which the British and Foreign Bible Society had given Mr. Hunter and himself.

The few weeks spent now and again at the headquarters of the China Inland Mission in London, afforded him peculiar pleasure. It can easily happen that a pioneer is but little known in his own Mission, for he has necessarily led an isolated life. Apart from the three women already referred to, and Mr. Ridley, who took his place at Urumchi, he had not seen a fellow-missionary for twelve years, and in the sixteen years since he left England there had been so many changes on the home staff that he now met many of its members for the first time.

He attended the Annual C.I.M. Summer School in Derbyshire, enjoyed the companionship of young people there and took part in the meetings, but he never felt very sure of himself as a public speaker. His outlook was focussed to a Central Asian view and he was conscious how easily he might infringe some British convention and perhaps give offence. He really felt he had done it once when, at the Swanwick Conference, Dr. Stuart Holden chaired a meeting at which he was speaking. He came down from the platform realising with horror that he had referred to the chairman as "Mr. Holden." He rushed to his three Central Asian friends to make a

clean breast of it and ask what he should do next. To his surprise they treated the incident quite lightly, but, seeing how keenly he felt it, told him to see Dr. Holden himself. He did so and came back radiant. "What a humble man he is," he said; "I apologised to him and he just threw up his head and roared with laughter. Then he took my arm and said: 'My dear brother, if you could know how little such things mean to me, you would not give it a second thought.'"

Though diffident as a public speaker he was quite otherwise in casual contacts and men everywhere found him a match for them. One day he sat in a railway carriage listening to the talk of men on their way to the races. It was all concerned with betting transactions and the stakes they would lay that day, their losses and their gains.

"That's nothing," he broke in, "I can tell you higher stakes than that."

The men stared and perhaps wondered if this lightweight was some unrecognised jockey.

"What do you mean?" someone asked.

"Well, what about gaining the whole world and losing your own soul?" he said, and then spoke to a sobered group, of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.

Children were irresistibly attracted to him, and in houses where he stayed he is remembered by the youngsters to this day, for sixteen years of

pioneer toil had failed to kill his love of a practical joke, and those who were his friends had to keep their wits about them if they were not to be caught at a disadvantage. At a certain picnic he good-naturedly offered to act as scavenger and clear away the litter. He collected empty tins, fruit peelings and waste paper, tied all up into a large parcel and walked off towards the sea to bury it in the sand. On the way he saw a group of small boys, and as he passed them he emitted a realistic series of mews, then patted the parcel, saying: "Be quiet." The children's attention was attracted and they followed as he walked ahead, mewing pitifully as he went; then looking furtively around he dug a deep pit and put the still mewing parcel into it. As he heaped up the sand the mews became fainter and fainter until they died away altogether and were heard no more.

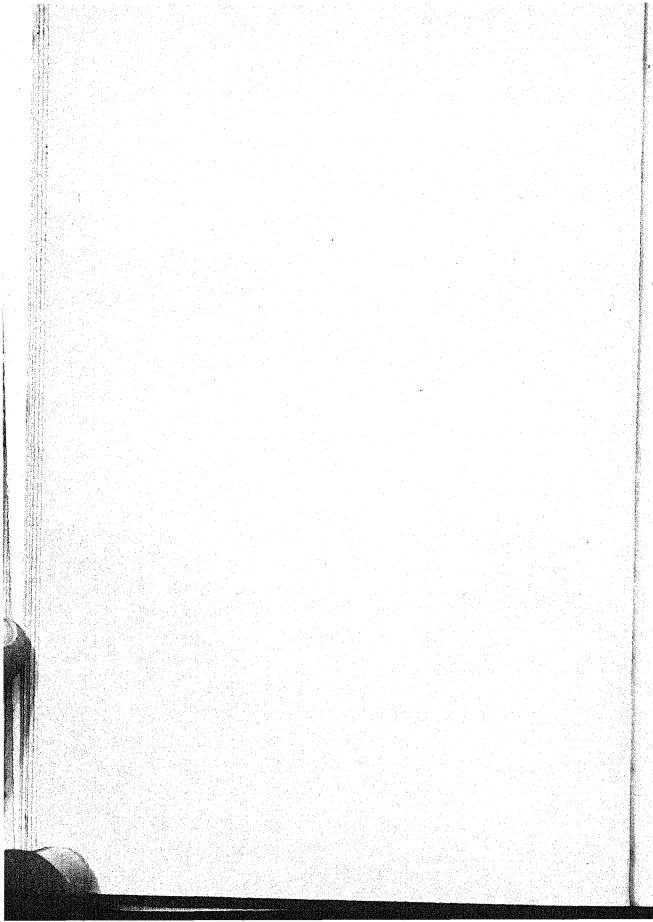
The indignant children felt that they had caught a criminal red-handed, one who would bury live kittens and leave them to a lingering death, so as soon as his back was turned they opened up the grave and disinterred the parcel, and he had the delight of watching them when they realised how they had been tricked.

In May 1928 Percy Mather braced himself to leave home and loved ones once more and face the arid life which held none of the things for which his heart craved. There were those who

urged him to make his path less solitary but on that point he was adamant. His firm conviction was that the kind of work to which he was called required a celibate missionary. All through furlough his asceticism never wavered and the watchful eyes of his mother recognised that he feared to permit himself any indulgence lest ease should take advantage of him, and in his own words, "let him down." Her daintiest dishes would often stand untasted, while he ate plain boiled rice and black treacle—the nearest approach that Fleetwood offered to Central Asian fare.

His close friends realised that he returned to Central Asia with a great burden on his heart, unrelieved by any exhilaration. As the day of separation from his family drew near, they were all brave together and none would do anything to weaken his purpose or make the going harder. Many times he repeated the sentence already quoted, both in talks with friends and in letters :

"I am not going back because I long to go ; it would have been much easier to remain with my loved home friends. I am not going back because I love the Chinese and Central Asian peoples. You may wonder then why I do it. Simply this: I believe it to be the will of God for me, and I delight to do Thy will, O my God !"



PERSISTENCE



PERSISTENCE

THE Divine Will which had become the controlling force of Percy Mather's life, demanded of him the supreme sacrifice of going back to Central Asia. At Liverpool Street station he and his "dear ones" looked in each others' faces for the last time, though mercifully they did not know it. There was no flinching and no one, either by word or by sign, made it more difficult for the other. "Mother was splendid," he wrote to a friend, but so were they all.

He was glad to escape observation and not be one of a party on board the P. & O. S.S. *Mantua* on which he sailed, and before reaching Gibraltar, which was the first opportunity for mailing letters, he wrote :

"My furlough seems just like a dream and it might be ages since I left home. I am off to practise my new tin whistle. 'Jesus still lead on' is my favourite tune at present. Today we met S.S. *Korea* homeward bound. How I would love to be with you all again but every day sees me further away. I do thank you for giving me such a happy furlough and I trust we shall see each other again ere long. I enclose a letter which I had from Dr.

Stuart Holden. Was it not kind of him to find time to write to me ? ”

From Marseilles he wrote :

“ I received your letters before the ship got to her berth and was soon settled in a quiet corner of the music room devouring them. I have been feeling so homesick that it took me all my time ‘ no ’ to greet. ’ My eyes are all swollen with holding back the tears but I am ‘ no ’ going to greet. ’ I wish I could see you again but the trouble is just that I can see you so plainly. Photographs and little relics make everything so real and remind me of all I am missing. But I am beginning to feel more like myself. What with all the hurry, rush and bustle, my brain was numbed and I could hardly realise that I was leaving home again. It seemed like a bad dream with little happy patches when I thought of you and mother. ”

At Marseilles the three women missionaries in company with whom he had travelled home from Central Asia, joined the boat and together they proceeded to Bombay. They were all veterans and had experienced so much of the ardours of the campaign that it was taken for granted between them that they were in for a stiff experience and no one pretended that it was otherwise. China was, as usual, in the throes of civil war and passports

so difficult to obtain that it seemed necessary for them all to travel *via* the Karakoram to Kashgar and Urumchi.

A halt was called in Bombay and again in Kashmir where, at Srinagar the whole complicated business of travel permits had to be transacted. Here they parted, for the three women decided to act on a telegraphic permit which reached them at the last moment, and while they proceeded to China by the sea route Mather joined Captain Mann who was also travelling to Kashgar.

The time spent in Srinagar showed that though Percy Mather had been passed by the doctor he was in reality far from strong. A slight attack of malaria produced such a degree of collapse as could not be accounted for by the illness itself. He knew, and he did not hide from his friends, that his heart had been overstrained and they all realised that it would inevitably be overstrained again. However, every suggestion of caution only worried him and little was said. After leaving Srinagar, he wrote:

Kargil.

July 8th, 1928.

"Here I am, more than half-way to Leh. I have been doubling the stages and so have got along very quickly. Twice I was travelling until 8.40 p.m. so that it was dark by the time we camped. My Ladakhi boy says he has never known

anybody to travel so quickly on the route before. However, I am quite ready for a rest today. The post leaves tonight, and I hope this will reach Srinagar by Tuesday and so catch the home mail.

"The road is most wonderful, and the way it is kept in repair is a tribute to the Government. We have had to cross a number of avalanches and snow bridges, but only one pass so far—the Zoji la. The scenery beyond the Zoji is quite different, wild, rugged and barren, hardly any trees. The inhabitants literally scrape a living from the sides of rocky mountain ledges. The people so far have been mixed, Kashmiris, Baltis, Dokbas and Bods. I felt quite at home when I saw the first Bod, for he was dressed like a Mongol and wore a queue."

Nearing Lama Yuru.

July 10th, 1928.

"We have crossed another pass today, the Namikha La, 13,000 ft, and are now encamped about 11,000 ft. up. We have gone beyond our stage, as we want to make a big one again tomorrow, and so spend the night at Khalatse, where is a Swiss Moravian missionary and his wife. We expect to get across another pass tomorrow morning."

Leh, Ladakh.

July 18th, 1928.

"I have just finished packing my bags, and have

washed a shirt, two collars and some socks. They are hanging on the line and we are waiting for our ponies to arrive. It is just 9.0 a.m. and the ponies were promised for 10.0 a.m., so you see I am in good time for once, and when the ponymen arrive, my washing should be dry.

"Yesterday we were informed that Capt. Mann's cook would require a photograph on his passport. There is no photographer in Leh, so I, being official photographer to the Expedition, was requested to take action. I took a snap at 1.30 p.m. and had it developed and printed by 5 p.m. Not too bad considering that I am still experimenting with my first camera."

*Head of Nubra Valley,
Foot of Kurrul Pass.*

"Yesterday we met a big caravan going to Leh, and I was very sorry that I had no letter ready to send, especially as there was a Russian refugee in it. He had escaped from Russia into Turkestan and the Chinese Officials had allowed him to leave *via* India. He is a well educated man and speaks very good English.

"I sent you a letter by a Ladakhi a few days ago. We were then held up at the river. We managed to swim all our horses across safely but some belonging to the Turki pilgrims travelling to Mecca were swept down stream. Others were stranded

on a bank in the middle of the water, and three men and three horses were drowned. Some of the men had been waiting twelve days to get their horses across and were still there when we left. They could not manage because there was no co-operation when trying to get the horses across, each cared only for his own. I myself salvaged two horses that had been swept into a whirlpool among the big rocks, and could not get out. The Turkis would not bother about them because they were not their own horses. We also were delayed, but only for a day and a half."

Kargalik, Turkestan.

August 19th, 1928.

"M. and I arrived safely yesterday. This is the first Chinese town after crossing the border and it was good to find Mr. Hunter here waiting for us. He was awfully glad to see us, having heard a report that the rivers were so high that we had turned back to Leh. In fact, he wrote to you yesterday to give you this news. I have never taken such a desperate journey in my life. The rivers were abnormally high and the road most dangerous. The pony I was riding fell over a precipice, but my life was mercifully spared. Our poor horses suffered terribly. Several of them died and the rest were too thin and wretched to go on. Our pony man has hired camels and

donkeys with two fresh horses, to finish the journey.

"We hope to spend a few days in Yarkand and a few in Kashgar. After that another two months should see us back in Urumchi. It was more than good of Mr. Hunter to come all this way to meet us. He has been waiting here for eight days so he timed it nicely, considering that he came more than seventy stages."

Yarkand.

August 23rd, 1928.

"Here we are, all safe and sound enjoying the hospitality of our Swedish friends. They are kind and homely and gave us a most hearty welcome. We only arrived on Tuesday evening but we seem to have known them for years already. The Customs were waiting for us, locked our boxes up for the night, and examined them next morning.

"Mr. A. is in charge of the Mission station here. He does not speak Chinese, but of course knows Turki. We brought 30 boxes of medicine for him and yesterday he asked me to go with him to see the Chinese Official, and ask him to let the boxes through at a reduced rate for Customs. It was awkward to do it through an interpreter, so he asked me to accompany him. The Official was most gracious and after a long talk, he let the boxes pass at a very reduced rate. Mr. A. was very much

pleased, because this will now be the fixed rate of Customs for the future."

At Kashgar the two men were guests at the British Consulate and Mather writes appreciatively of all the kindness shown him both by the Government Officials and the missionaries.

"The members of the Swedish Mission here are very kind and have given us a most loving welcome. They form quite a large group and are doing a splendid work."

Without unnecessary delay they made ready for the journey to Urumchi, hoping that by doubling the stages they might reach there before the winter blizzards set in.

Aqsu.

September 22nd, 1928.

"We arrived at dusk yesterday. It took us five hours to get the horses and cart across the river. People just crowded into the ferry boat, two carts, several horses, one cow and twenty donkeys with as many people as could possibly crowd in. I made Mr. Hunter get out and wait for the next boat, while I went on and looked after the goods. The ferry boat is only small but has a lot of beam and, when loaded, only a few inches of freeboard. I was thankful to get safely across.

"The postmaster heard of our arrival and

brought round three letters. I have read and reread them, not having had a home letter for three months."

Kuche.

September 29th, 1928.

"We arrived here after some very hard days of travel, twelve to fourteen hours per day without a stop except to water the horses and adjust the harness. Now the horses need rest and we too should be none the worse for a long week-end. We are staying at the 'White Inn', but there is absolutely nothing white about it. Grapes, peaches and pears are wonderful both in quality and cheapness and for a few cash we buy more than we can eat.

"Mr. Hunter is standing the journey well. It is wonderful how he keeps up through such very long days, and such short nights. We leave at two every morning. He drives his ammunition cart and I am in the saddle. By the time I reach Urumchi I shall have ridden more than two thousand miles, but my horse is strong and comfortable to ride."

Urumchi.

October, 1928.

"We hoped to get here before the first blizzard of the winter, but we did not manage it and arrived in a snowstorm. Even the Customs officer did not

see us pass so there was no examination of boxes and no fuss whatever, which was just what I wanted. Nimgir had ridden on ahead and warned Mr. Ridley, so Mashtuk knew we were near and was on the roof barking like mad and fairly jumping for joy. He did not recognise me at first in my big transport coat, so whilst he was fussing Mr. Hunter, I slipped away to my room, sat down in my deck chair and gave the old familiar whistle. What happened is impossible to describe ; he came bounding into my room, sprang up on my shoulder and started to lick my face and neck, whining and barking just as I had been imagining he would do. I had been looking forward to this meeting for days."

Thanks to the blizzard, Percy Mather managed to slip back into Urumchi without public acclamation, but it was soon noised abroad that he was there, and the wooden-tongued door-bell clanged incessantly to announce visits from those who welcomed him home with sincere affection. Many of the callers needed his assistance and some had saved up an illness for months in order to gain the benefit of his medical skill, so he was soon as busy as ever he had been, and when the news that he now had a complete equipment of ophthalmic instruments spread to the Mongol encampments, the Mongols came in bands to the town, seeking his aid.

"I had to attend to eighty patients after I had taken Sunday service," he writes, "so many people come to us for medicine. A Mongol has just been in with trachoma and ulcers on the eye. He brought us a fine present—3 lbs lump sugar, 2 lb. box of biscuits (It says 'English' biscuits on the box, but I think they are made in Russia), 70 large tomatoes, 10 lbs potatoes, 6 huge water melons, 20 cayenne pods and 4 large cabbages."

For the first year after leaving home the character of his letters is curiously changed. He has become so eager for the intimate news of home and so vitally interested in every detail of home life that Fleetwood, rather than Central Asia, dominates them and through all there runs the perpetual refrain: "Take care of yourselves—I trust we shall be spared to meet again." On Christmas Day he wrote: "How I would have enjoyed being with you all to-day. I would gladly have crossed the Karakoram once more in order to see you."

When presently the winter frosts broke and the streets of Urumchi dissolved into a sea of mud, the two men laid their plans for a summer campaign. This year they purposed to visit Kuldja, a large town in the fertile district of Ili. As was their habit, they spoke but little to others of what they intended to do, but watched for the roads to become passable and one day slipped off before they were missed. By late June they were travelling among

the nomads : " We had quite a good time with the Mongols and Qazaqs, though the weather was sometimes very bitter with snow and hailstones." During this journey Ningir went down with an attack of enteric. Up in the mountains, far away from help or the possibility of buying food, he lay between life and death, devotedly nursed by Mr. Hunter, for Mather himself was running a temperature, and before Ningir was well enough to be moved the party was faced with real food shortage. The following letter tells the story :

July, 1229.

" We walk by faith not by sight.

" We are camping by the River Mujuk, on a high plateau between two ranges of snow mountains. I have just been looking over our stores and find them very low. We have only about 5 lbs. of rice, 5 lbs. of flour, 1 lb. of lentils, a few ounces of tea, 2 ounces of cocoa, a little salt, and $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of Mongol butter. There is not a bit of firewood, nor a piece of coal, and as far as sight is concerned, the outlook is extremely poor.

" Three weeks ago Mr. Hunter and I, with Ningir and a Turki boy, left Urumchi, hoping to travel to Kuldja by the mountain route and preach among Mongols and Qazaqs by the way. When we reached one of the highest parts of the journey Ningir was taken ill with enteric and by the time

we reached the River Mujuk he could go no further. We have now been held up for several days, far away from any house, town or village. On the way we passed many Mongol tents, but this district being high and cold is desolate at present, though we hear there is an encampment about twenty miles down the valley, but Ningir is too weak to be moved, in fact he is in a very serious condition. We have used many medicines and have prayed much, but his temperature still remains high.

"There has been a great deal of rain in the mountains this year. To-day, as I write, the clouds hang low, and a heavy hailstorm is driving up the valley and rattling on our tent. Here we are, with a sick man badly in need of milk, and our stores sadly depleted. As far as sight is concerned there does not seem anything to encourage us, but there is something and that is the Word of God. This morning the text : ' We walk by faith, not by sight,' appealed very strongly to me. We have also got a 'Cheering Words' calendar hanging up in our tent and on that to-day's text is : 'Consider the ravens ; for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn ; and God feedeth them ; how much more are ye better than the fowls ?' These are cheering words, but since coming here we have not had a single raven to 'consider.'

"I said that we had neither firewood nor coal. One may travel many days on this south side of

the mountains and not see a single tree or bush of any description. In the lower mountains there are plenty, but in these high parts there is nothing but grass, and apart from grass, there is nothing to burn. We burn it in the form of horse dung. It makes splendid fuel when dry, but as we have had rain, sleet and snow for most of the journey, the dung is wet, and gives out more smoke than fire. It takes a lot of time and patience to coax any heat out of it.

"Yesterday a strong wind sprang up and the sun came out for a short while. Immediately we emptied our tents, aired all our things, and tried to make Nimgir a little more comfortable. It was nice to feel somewhat dry again, but to-day clouds, mist, hail and sleet help to make everything damp once more. Yet a bunch of blue forget-me-nots hangs bravely at our tent door and helps to cheer us up a bit. Close by, the ground is covered with flowers, and one can gather over twenty different kinds in less than five minutes. So if we have no ravens to consider we have plenty of beautiful flowers, yet we cannot but feel anxious about poor Nimgir, everything seems to be against him.

"Yesterday two Qazaqs rode up to our tent in a very exhausted condition. They are guides to an English traveller whose horses have been stolen and they are going to report to the Prince. Nimgir's elder brother is a Lama at the Prince's camp, so

we wrote a letter in Mongolian telling him of Nimgir's illness and we supplied the Qazaqs with tea and bread from our scanty store.

"Two days later we actually saw four ravens flying round our camp and next day when our boy said: 'We have only two basins of rice and one of lentils left,' I repeated the words after him, but added: '*And God.*' This cheered him up a bit, and while gathering fuel a text of Scripture came strongly to my mind: 'Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?' I had to stop and laugh when I thought of it, yet not a laugh of doubt but of faith. The text seemed a direct challenge. Here we were, held up in this wilderness with only two basins of rice and one of lentils. 'Could God prepare a table in this *wilderness*?'

"At ten a.m., while gathering fuel, I was surprised and delighted to see an English officer with two Indian servants approaching our tent. It was the traveller, Colonel S., formerly of the Indian Army, who had seen our tents from a distance and leaving the road, came along to inspect. We had met before in Urumchi so needed no introduction. The previous night he had camped not far from us, but neither of us knew it. He said: 'I intended going on, but should like to stop and enjoy some English society; that is, if you will have me.'

"Shortly afterwards his caravan arrived with Turki and Indian servants. Three or four tents

were pitched near ours and we seemed quite a busy little village. Then the Colonel said : ' Please come along in half an hour and have a cup of tea with me.' We went and found tea, bread and butter, cheese and jam, and a *table* ! You can imagine how vividly the text came into my mind once again, but you cannot imagine all the feelings that passed through my heart. In course of conversation the Colonel said : ' Now to be practical, what can I give you in the way of stores ? ' We made a humble request, but he soon showed us that he could give us far more than we dared to ask—Tinned milk, Allenbury's Malted Food, medicines for Nimgir, cocoa, rice, flour, sugar, butter, cheese, damson jam, baking powder, arrowroot and a tin of Lyle's Golden Syrup. (I was specially pleased with this last as it is my favourite ' jam.')

" In the evening the Colonel invited us to dinner. A high wind was blowing and the cook had had great difficulty with the fire, but he made us a splendid meal which we thoroughly enjoyed, not having had any meat or vegetables for over a fortnight.

" Menu.

Kidney Soup.

Mutton Chops.

Potatoes—Carrots—Kidney Beans.

Blanc-mange and Apricots.

Dutch Cheese and Cucumber.

Coffee and Tea.

"Next day Colonel S. invited us to a farewell breakfast, then took the height of our camp with a hypsometer and found it to be 9500 feet, after which we said goodbye to our kind friend and watched him out of sight.

"By this time the Mongols in the valley heard about us and came for medicines, bringing with them presents of milk, butter and cheese, and some Turki merchants sold us some of their rice. Then a Turki on his way to Urumchi with a flock of sheep sold us one that had become lame, and killed and dressed it for us.

"Nimgir's brother then paid us a visit and brought us flour and rice and half a sheep, so that we had plenty for ourselves and some to spare for occasional Mongol and Qazaq guests who spent the night with us.

"On August 17 we arrived safely in Kuldja, Nimgir regaining his usual health and strength. He owes much to the careful nursing of Mr. Hunter, who waited on him hand and foot. The long delay brought us into close touch with Mongols and Qazaqs and gave us opportunity for preaching the Gospel to many who had never heard it before, and may never hear it again."

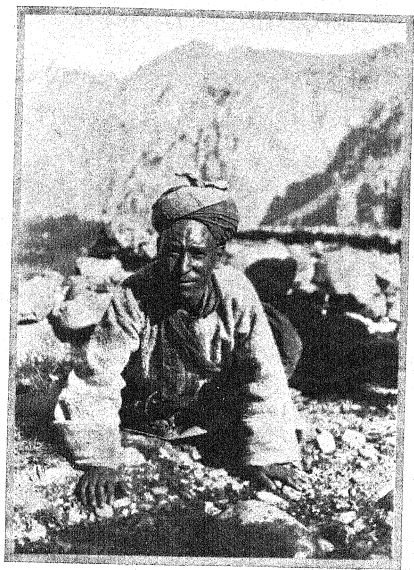
One of the chief reasons for visiting Kuldja was to reach the colonies of Manchu settlers. These are descendants of the soldiers of Chien-lung, who

were given territory in this fertile area as reward for military prowess. Isolated as they were, they continued to use the old Manchu language which has been superseded by Chinese in Manchuria itself. The British and Foreign Bible Society was able to supply Scriptures in that old Manchu tongue, but the two pioneers were the only people who could act as distributors and get them into the hands of those who could read them.

Kuldja.

September 20th, 1929.

"Yesterday we received a large parcel of Scriptures from Urumchi. We hired a cart to take the books from the Post Office, but the horse would either bolt or not go at all. Every time it stopped, I had to jump down and lead it by the head a few steps until it bolted again, when I had to spring on very quickly. We remonstrated with the driver and he said the horse had never been in a cart before that day. He had just bought it and was breaking it in. After we had run down several people, Mr. Hunter decided to get off and walk, but I stuck on, and we reached the inn safely, only bumping into one cart on the way. After discharging the cargo, I saw that a pin was missing from the back wheel, so that it was liable to come off any moment. I drew the carter's attention to it, and he cursed the thief who had stolen it, then



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picked up a stalk of Indian corn, stuck it in and drove off. Next morning we hired another cart and drove five miles to the Manchu city. It is in splendid repair, being only about fifty years old and has one of the most beautiful towers I have yet seen. We had a very busy time there and sold out practically all the books we had with us. Then we called at the Post Office. The postmaster was very kind and gave us a nice lunch of cocoa, cakes, raspberry jam, grapes, apples, pears and peaches. Then we went back to the Chinese city and sold books until dark. On Tuesday we took another stock of books to the Manchu city and sold out very quickly.

"Coming back to the town, there were ten of us, squatting on a cart about the size of our table-top, huddled with knees up to chin and with our heads bent to lessen the bumps from the rough sticks which formed a cover to the cart. The driver was very reckless, and on nearing Kuldja challenged another driver and passed him. Then, in spite of our protests, he tried to do the same with yet another, and there soon ensued a mad race over a fearful road. There were three horses to each cart, and at one place just as we were about to overtake, the driver drew his horses across ours and forced us on to a bad piece of road. The cart ran madly along on two wheels, then turned over with a fearful crash. You can imagine the rest. I

was the first to scramble out and immediately rushed round and held on to the horses which were plunging and attempting to bolt with the body of the cart, which had come away from the wheels. When we had cut the harness and sorted ourselves out, the only one found to have sustained any serious injury was the driver, who had broken a couple of ribs. Recently several people were killed here in just such an accident. A Noghai carter agreed to take us and our goods on to the inn. He seemed to be a most careful man and well he might be, for we soon found out that he was almost blind and had to be warned whenever a cart came along."

Urumchi.

October 10th, 1929.

"Safely back. I had seen no home mail since June. I was afraid of the letters getting lost if they were forwarded, so left them to accumulate here and what a stock awaited me! I read your first and last letters and thought I would leave the rest until I had a little more leisure. It was not early when I went to bed, considering I had been up since three o'clock that morning, however I thought I would just glance at one letter before I went to sleep. It was so nice that I thought I would have another and so I went on and on until

I had got through the whole bunch. It was getting on for dawn before I finally finished, with a light heart and a thick head."

In November 1929 the three women missionaries already referred to, revisited Urumchi in the course of a long trek and, on account of the winter cold, sheltered with their friends until early spring. This time they were accompanied by Elder and Mrs. Liu, of Suchow, Kansu, who were sharing the missionary journey. Mr. Ridley was away travelling towards Kashgar, so his house was free for their use, and Messrs. Hunter and Mather, only recently returned from Kuldja, were settling down to their winter occupations, which always included language study and translation work.

Mather was very eager to get at it again. The Mongol dictionary on which he had spent so much labour was now in the hands of a publishing firm, and his attention was directed to the preparation of a Manchurian dictionary and grammar. Unfortunately it was impossible to get the help he needed in Urumchi, for the Russian friend who was able to give it him had moved to Chuguchak, three weeks' journey away, on the borders of Siberia. A plan had formed and was maturing in his mind, which was to go and live in Chuguchak, staying there long enough to get this piece of work done. His home letters begin to hold references to the

plan, but it was not to be carried into effect until the autumn of 1930.

Meanwhile he writes to his mother : " The ladies are here enjoying the comfort of a clean house. We all dine together and the conversation is always interesting. They are busy all day visiting and are arranging a class for teaching the phonetic script to a number of women and girls. Topsy, their little deaf and dumb child, is most interesting, a fine little girl. They had a bad experience at the frontier being detained there for six days in a very poor place where there is nothing but a camp of soldiers and conditions are most wretched. Recently we had a visit from a German traveller who walked here all the way from Central China. He was detained six weeks in the same place and treated like a prisoner."

Percy Mather's forty-sixth birthday fell on December 9th, and as three days later one of the Trio also had a birthday, it was decided to celebrate the two events with a proper English party—something worthy of Fleetwood. There were presents for both of them and a good sit-down Lancashire tea with pasties, jellies, jam, iced cake and other dainties, followed by a social hour and singing, accompanied by harmonium, fiddle, mouth-organ and divers kinds of music. Russian Christmas the next event and when it was over he wrote :

" Topsy saw her first Christmas tree yesterday in

the house of a Russian lady. She was enchanted, not to say speechless, indeed she nearly regained her speech when the lady gave her a doll and as soon as she got home, she started to make bedding and a pillow for it. She misses nothing and is as sharp as a needle. The ladies are busy every day working among the women and attracting them to the Sunday services. The Church is not big enough for the congregations and we are packed out. There were actually about three hundred people present today, though the temperature was below zero."

Urumchi.

March 23rd, 1930.

"Several more opium cases this past week. I had a very hard struggle with one of them, in fact, the hardest I have had so far and I hope never to have another like it.

"Last Monday evening the wild Mongol horse was taken ill. We had quite a job to throw it and cut its nose and this made us late for tea. We had just finished when a carriage from one of the highest military officials arrived. The younger of his two wives, a girl of sixteen, tired of life, had taken opium. Quite a time had elapsed before they called me, so before she had time to vomit very much she became unconscious, and I knew I was in for a hard time. Had she been unconscious

before I arrived on the scene I would not have tackled the job, however I set to work using artificial respiration, and was at it for nineteen hours, all that night and all the next day ; I also sat up the following night in case of need. My arms and chest are still very sore.

“ Her husband supplied soldiers to help me, but they could not do much and I had to keep at it practically the whole time. I had not even time to go and get a proper meal. At midnight the case looked hopeless, and the mother-in-law sent for a priest to drive away the opium devil, but the husband explained that it was not his doing and said, ‘ You just go on with your work and leave them to theirs.’

“ The old priest came, read prayers over her and repeated all kinds of incantations, now and again blowing so that the spray from his mouth went over my hands, then he burnt a lot of sacred paper, waving the blazing paper over the woman and reciting incantations. A basin of water was placed on the floor with chopsticks laid across it as that is where the devil takes refuge when it leaves a woman.

“ The priest had also a big kitchen chopper which he swung round and round for about ten minutes within six inches of my throat, reciting all the while, then he started to burn more paper, but the Official told him he had done enough and that he could go.

He went away carrying the basin of water, saying it was very heavy, that he had got the devil all right and the woman would soon be quite well, but it was another sixteen hours before she could breathe again.

"When she was finally out of danger, her husband made me a feast, and opened some tins of plums, peaches and pineapple. I was not able to eat much, but was very glad of the fruit. He also gave me a present of one hundred taels, which is quite a lot out here, though only equal to about £2. If it were only a matter of money I would not do it again for ten times the amount."

Urumchi.

June 15th, 1930.

"Here we are well on in June and still in Urumchi, but Mr. Hunter has now almost finished his translation work, and I expect we shall soon be on the move.

"The other day I was just preparing for bed, and having been up since 2 a.m. that morning I was ready for it, when there came an excited knocking at the door. I knew what it would be, another opium case. The messenger, a Moslem boy of 20, urged me to come at once and save life. A young fellow of 18 had taken opium. While busy with the case, two men started to quarrel, and one began to drag the other out

of the little room in order to fight outside. He was a big, strong, young Mohammedan and the other fellow being smaller, did not want to fight. The big man held him by the neck and their friends were unable to separate them. I thought to interfere, but decided to leave them alone, however, they made such a noise I could not hear myself shout, let alone speak; it also made me mad to see two or three people unable to break the strong man's hold of the other fellow, especially when I knew I could do it in a tick by using Jujitsu. Finally I went up, put my hand under his jaw and landed a Jujitsu trick on him which made him let go his man immediately. I don't know who was more surprised, himself or the other people. I scolded him soundly, and said, 'You sent for me to save life and here you are trying to kill,' and he did not answer another word. I evidently 'larned him.' "

Urumbi.

July 2nd, 1930.

"This is the last letter before we start for Chuguchak. Little Mashtuk is looking perfectly miserable these days, he sees us busy packing and knows what it all means. Mr. Hunter, Nimgir and I start tomorrow, so you can guess I am extra busy making preparations for the journey. It is now nearly midnight and I have still things to do so

will not get much sleep. I shall not post between here and Chuguchak, so do not be surprised if you do not hear for some time."

The Camel Inn, Chuguchak.

July 24th, 1930.

"Your letter of July 7th arrived today. It makes me feel very near and stirs up longings for home. 'Oh! for the wings, for the wings of a dove.' Five days from here and I could be on steam all the way to England. Just five days by cart to Lake Zaizan, then eight days by steamer to Omsk and eight more days by rail to London with a few extra days for connections; a month would see me home nicely.

"Here we are enjoying the comforts (?) of inn-life in Chuguchak. We had a hard journey here. Heat, mosquitoes and flies were very bad indeed. You would not think much of this inn. Last night the room was almost unbearably stuffy, so I went out in the yard and slept on two planks. A horse and donkey were feeding close beside me, so close I could touch them without rising, then cows, camels, horses and dogs were scattered about the inn-yard. Six feet away was a big heap of cow manure, quite clean as it had all been well kneaded by hand into cakes and dried in the sun, for the winter's fuel. The donkey gave a heartrending bray now and again, but the most disturbing

element was a Chinese flour-mill which kept up a continual clatter right through the whole night. If it kept on one gear, it would not be so bad, but it is always changing gears. There are also several other mills, one next door and others in the close vicinity, so I had rather a restless night. I have just been up on the roof and made two big holes to ventilate my room, so I hope for more sleep tonight."

Chuguchak.

August 10th, 1930.

"Not long before we started, Nimgir was badly hurt. He was riding the white horse and driving the others to water, when, a few yards from our door, it reared, plunged, and, throwing its head back, suddenly struck Nimgir on the nose. I think the nose was broken, and it is still swollen. Someone came running in to say that Nimgir was hurt, so I ran out in my shirt sleeves. The blood was streaming down his face and he soon had two lovely black eyes. Seeing he had no limbs broken I handed him over to Mr. Hunter and, mounting the white horse, prepared to chase the other horses which were now out of sight. It reared again and tried on the same tricks with me, but I was ready and gave it a taste of the whip, so we went flying through the streets in fine style, I still in my shirt sleeves, until we caught

up with the other horses, when we slowed down."

The period spent in Chuguchak was always spoken of by Percy Mather as one of the happiest years of his missionary life. He lived and witnessed there in the most unconventional way and under conditions of freedom impossible to those working on the accepted lines of missionary endeavour. Such freedom would have been disastrous for a man without experience both of the peoples, their languages, their customs and their unfathomable points of view. But experience he had, and it made him thoroughly at home among the mixed population of this frontier town.

Good or evil reputation travels quickly in the East, and word had come that this was a man of unblemished character and a friend to all in need. On this account he was invited to live in the house of a wealthy Siberian and was soon on the footing of one of the family. "These people," he writes, "really treat me as a brother beloved." He was living among men to whom God had been misrepresented, from whom, on the one hand, He had been hidden by thick clouds of superstitious practices and who, on the other hand, were exposed to a propaganda of blasphemies. His business was so to live in the midst that they would see his good works and glorify his Father in heaven.

Among such people, and not only on the borders of Siberia, but throughout Asia, men of the religious orders, be they priests, missionaries, lamas or monks, stand at a disadvantage, for they are suspected of not contributing the quota due from every human being towards the public good, and of being merely professional preachers, an occupation not smiled upon when followed by the young and vigorous, and which is liable to cause the youthful preacher to be held in contempt by the very people he seeks to serve.

Mather's daily occupation was translation work, and on that account alone he was known to be an exceedingly busy man, yet in his off time his fellow citizens had to recognise that he bought up every opportunity of witnessing for his Master, and that he stood for something quite definite which was unflagging zeal in demonstrating the Gospel to men.

In his quiet, unassuming way Mather showed himself a pioneer in the bold work of rethinking Missions. He never wrote about it, he never attended conferences, he did not even discourse on the subject—he merely did it.

He felt no necessity to rent a preaching hall, or even institute a Sunday service and there was no suggestion of the method which expresses itself in the stultifying phrase : "I am opening a mission station." He was just a man, moving among men

so guilelessly, that he prepared for himself no shelter behind which to organise a life unlike that of the people around him. He recognised his responsibility to bring to them the offer of salvation, and the news of the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, but having brought it, they were responsible to God for the acceptance or refusal of that offer, nor was he called on to bear the burden of their failure to do so. He never seemed to be weighed down with the morbid sense of responsibility which oppresses so many missionaries. His friends often envied this robust attitude. "They have the same Lord, the same Spirit and access to the same Book as we have," he would say. "I had to find my way and they must find theirs. The Lord will lead them as He led me."

The community saw him come and go. He ate with them, was interested in their occupations, on occasion he would join in the fun of their games, and he attended the baptisms, weddings and funerals in the Russian Church. He mourned with them in sorrow, ministered to them in sickness and shared the ordinary incidents of everyday life, but whenever there was a spare hour he was out preaching on the bazar, calling on shopkeepers with his bundle of gospels, or praying with the sick and dying.

To test the value of such unprofessional missionary service, it is only necessary to mention

the name, Percy Mather, in the Russian, Tatar, Chinese or Mongol quarters of Chuguchak and it will be seen at once that he was measured at his true value. He was light, for wherever he went he witnessed to the Light, he was salt and took an uncompromising stand against evil and he was wise to lead men to the Saviour.

Chuguchak.

August 3rd, 1930.

"I have already started work on the Manchu grammar and am making good progress—about fifty pages this past week. There are about three hundred and twenty in all, so, at the present rate, the grammar should be nearly through in about two months, but the dictionary is a very much bigger contract. I don't know how long that will take, I should say at least six months. Eight months work will only give a rough draft, and afterwards I shall need to go over it carefully, polish it and write it all out afresh, as I did with the Mongol grammar. You see, I have undertaken a big job; however, I trust it will be of great use to somebody for work among the Manchus.

"My collaborator, Mr. I., is now in very poor circumstances, and living from hand to mouth, in a small, three-room mud house with mud floors. He has been teaching English and Russian but has no pupils during the summer months. He has four

children, and the eldest son is a very remarkable youth. He is almost stone deaf but is an indefatigable student. Besides Russian, he reads French, English and German. His favourite pastime is the working out of mathematical problems. His father has been able to get him a few volumes of an Encyclopaedia and he sits reading them, his handsome face alive with intelligence, yet cut off from human intercourse by his deafness.

"Mrs. I. is kept busy with housework. She belongs to a family which was once wealthy but which has now lost everything. She is very well educated and speaks German fluently. He is a University man and is very much interested in languages. It would be difficult to find a better helper to translate this grammar."

Chuguchak.

September 20th, 1930.

"I have now started the dictionary, a much bigger business than even I had thought, and it goes ahead but slowly. I finished the vowels the other day and have now started on the consonants.

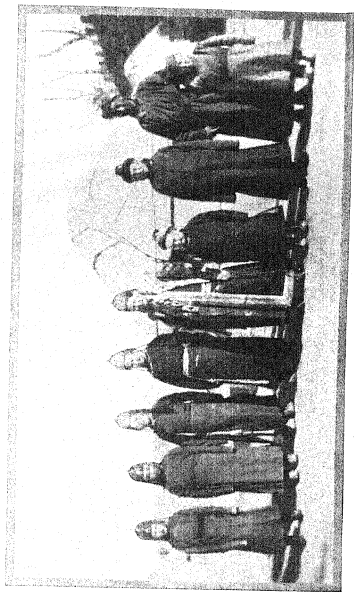
"It is costing me a lot of money but it is wonderful how supplies come in, and the rate of exchange has never been so favourable all the time that I have been in China. The dollar now stands at eighteen to the pound. It used to average eight, and during the war dropped to five. The

high rate, however, is very bad for getting things from home, and many business people must be suffering very much."

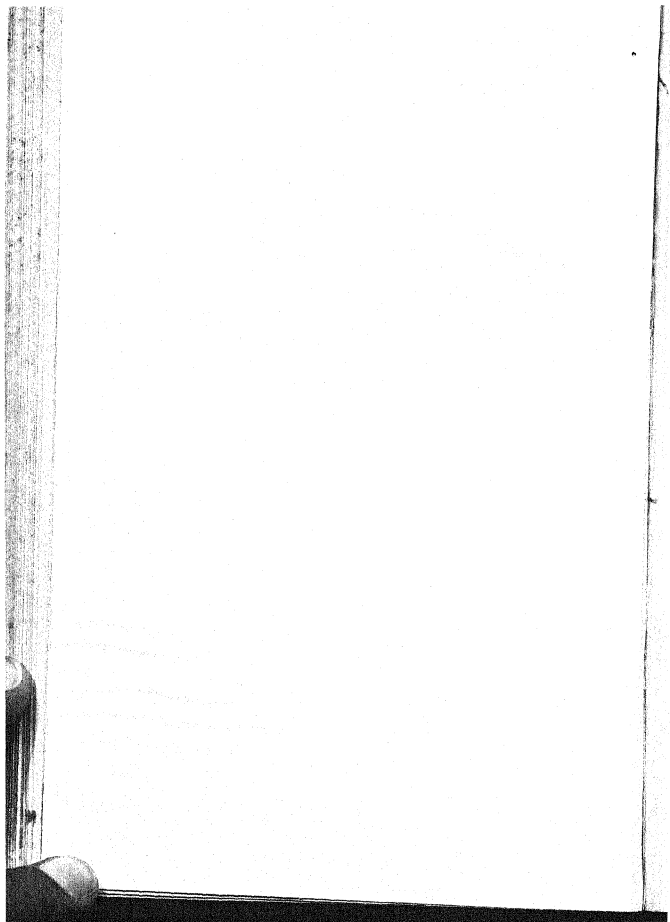
Chuguchak.

October 7th, 1930.

"I have had a very busy time these past few days with many patients. Some of them were quite distinguished people—the wife of the chief Ahong of the Mosque, two wives of a head military official, and a young Mongol Princess. She and her mother have just arrived from Peking *via* Siberia, and are on their way to their home half-way between Chuguchak and Urumchi. She is only seventeen, speaks English perfectly, also French, Chinese and Mongolian. She is not strong and has caught a very severe chill. Last night I had little hope that she would live till morning. Her mother cannot speak English, but is dressed in the latest European fashion. It is most touching to see how she waits on her daughter, anticipating her slightest wish, pressing a kiss now and again on her forehead and speaking to her in cheerful, endearing terms. Sometimes when the Princess was very weak and the heart almost stopped, she would say: 'Oh, mother, I'm fearing.' The mother would reply in a most loving way: 'No, dear, why should you fear? I am with you and



A MONGOL FAMILY WITH TENT IN THE BACKGROUND



the doctor is with you, there is nothing to fear !' She is a remarkably brave woman ; she knows the case is extremely serious, but in the presence of her daughter she is quite cheerful and encouraging."

Chiguchak.

October 13th, 1930.

"The doctor has been attending the Mongol Princess for a week now, but she has not improved but only grown worse. During the past 48 hours she has been delirious day and night. It is most touching to see the way her mother waits on her. She has not slept herself these past two nights, but has sat up all the time soothing her daughter and speaking words of comfort to her incessantly. She has hardly eaten anything and I am afraid she also will soon be ill, as she cannot keep up like this very much longer. They have sent for the elder sister, but she lives ten days' journey from here on the other side of the mountains. It is quite a tragedy. I have been going several times each day and sometimes at night, but of course I cannot interfere in any way now that the doctor has taken charge, though I believe homeopathic treatment would be much better for her. The other day I noticed a great change had taken place and before night she became delirious."

Chuguchak.

October 20th, 1930.

"The Princess passed away early Friday morning. The mother of course was heartbroken but restrained her grief like the queen she is, and gave orders as to what was to be done. They were staying in the house of a wealthy Mohammedan and she showed great thoughtfulness. The Moslems object to coffins, so the mother gave orders for the side room in a near-by temple to be prepared. The Chinese often use these rooms for storing their dead previous to burial. She had it well cleaned and meanwhile she ordered the Mongol servants to prepare the body. They brought a white silk dress, and a long blue silk scarf was wound round the head. She also ordered a coffin to be taken to the temple to await the body.

"Then the servants brought a stretcher and carried away our little Princess. As they were going out of the door she ordered them to halt and saying, 'Alas! Alas! my daughter!' pressed two kisses on her brow and shaking with suppressed sobs almost fell to the ground. I supported her to a couch and Mr. Hunter and I comforted her as well as we could. I made her a cup of tea and she drank it gratefully. After a while she said, 'When I passed through here on my way to Peking, I buried a child. In Peking I have buried

my husband and now when I come back I have buried another child. 'This is an empty world.' I said, 'Yes, it is empty without the Lord Jesus, but if you have Him, He can more than make up for all.'

"It does seem such a pity, a girl of seventeen, knowing English, French, Chinese, Japanese and Mongolian to be taken away when she might have been of such service to her own people."

Chuguchak.

October 22nd, 1930.

"This is the day known as 'Snow day' because every year the first blizzard comes over the mountains on October 22nd. We always get it in Urumchi and here also the snow duly appeared this morning. Last night the sky was overcast, there was a bitterly cold wind and I was afraid we were in for a big fall, but this morning the sun came out and the snow vanished. Mr. Hunter is busy making preparations for returning to Urumchi before it is too cold."

When Mr. Hunter left Chuguchak he took Ningir with him and Percy Mather was left alone but he had become acquainted with Mr. K., a wealthy Siberian who lived in a large house standing in a courtyard surrounded with single rooms generally used for business purposes. Mr. K. was given to hospitality and the more he knew of the missionary the better

he liked him, so he suggested that Mather should come and occupy one of his rooms. Mather accepted and a warm friendship quickly sprang up between the two men so that, before long, Mather was like one of the family.

Chuguchak.

November 6th, 1930.

"Here I am in my new quarters. I have a splendid room with three windows and best of all, shutters over the windows, a Russian stove, boarded floor painted brown, boarded ceiling painted light blue and a spring bed, the first I ever slept on in China. I have a lovely carpet, not on the floor but hanging on the wall round the head and side of my bed. I have put up two pictures, one is the calendar with the boats which mother sent me and the other the Christmas card with the sailing ship, from Edith. You cannot imagine what a difference it makes to my work, to have such a nice room after the dirty old inn."

Chuguchak.

Christmas, 1930.

"I suppose you will be wondering what kind of a Christmas I have had. On Christmas Eve I sat up working until 2 a.m., then washed my floor, tidied things up a bit for Christmas, had a bath and went to bed. I woke about 7 a.m., tried to

sing 'Christians, awake,' and other carols, then thought of you all for about half-an-hour, before I got up, wondering how you were all getting on, and whether mother was in good form for Christmas. I went along to breakfast and received the congratulations of the company, then gave my host an hour's English lesson. Went to my house, cleaned out the stove and restoked it, slung a bag of books and tracts over my shoulder and hurried off to the post, selling a Qazaq gospel and giving away tracts as I went.

"At the Post Office, I got my wonderful mail, then called to see a sick Mohammedan, hurried back and just revelled in the letters and cards. Then hurried off to Mr. I.'s, and got through four pages of translation, with a lunch in between. Both Mrs. I. and my host wanted to make me something special for today, but I said I would wait until their Christmas, which is a fortnight later than ours. I have had a good feast of letters today, and I prefer this to any other feast."

Chnguchak.

January 9th, 1931.

"Last Wednesday was Russian Christmas, thirteen days behind ours. First comes our Christmas, then our New Year, followed by Russian Christmas and their New Year. A month later is Chinese New Year followed by Moslem New Year,

so we get plenty of opportunity for congratulations. A few days ago I sent greetings to friends of many nationalities in Urumchi including Chinese, Tungan, Turki, Tatar, Qazaq, Mongol, Manchu, Russian, German, Polish, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Scotch and English.

"Russian Christmas began on Christmas Eve with a three hours' service, and the bell rang again at five thirty on Christmas morning. That service lasted two and a half hours and as there are no seats in the Russian Churches I was glad when it was over. I realised for the first time the meaning of 'the weakest go to the wall,' for the old, weak and infirm naturally made for the wall to get a little support.

"There was no quiet Christmas dinner but visitors coming and going the whole day, some of them the worse for drink, but my host gave orders to the door-keeper not to admit any such. Little boys and girls came to my room singing and reciting and scampered off delighted with a few cash. The priest and some members of the choir also came and sang a carol in my room. In fact there were so many people coming about that I had no chance to get any dinner.

"Next day some friends were invited round for a social evening. At supper time port was brought on the table and everybody was expected to take a glass, but needless to say I did not take any. There were two young girls, about seventeen years old,

and the others did their best to press them to have a glass ; it was a real persecution but they stuck it out bravely. I did not say anything, thinking it best to let them fight their own battle, but I helped them with my eyes and prayers and they won through."

Chnguchak.

January 18th, 1931.

"To-day we had a baptism in the drawing-room. Mr. K's sister came forty miles bringing her little four months old baby to be christened. A big bucket was put on a chair and candles placed round it. The priest read prayers and chanted, making the sign of the cross on the child's forehead, hands, breast and the soles of its feet, then plunged it overhead three times in the bucket. After that the child's godparents marched round the bucket three times carrying candles, while more prayers were chanted. Then they pressed their lips to the priest's cross and the ceremony was over.

"Later on Mr. K. came to my room, looking very serious and said : ' As a result of your *propaganda* I have determined henceforth not to drink any more wine.' I said : ' I am afraid you will fail.' He looked surprised and answered : ' I really mean it.' I said : ' So did Peter and many others who trusted in their own strength, but if you have Jesus Christ with you, you will win through.' He seemed to

be in earnest and has got safely over the New Year without touching it.

"It is hard for Russians to keep away from drink as practically everyone takes wine. Mr. K. does not get drunk but he says 'it is not good for the organism.' I showed him Proverbs 23, and he was much struck by the words: 'At last it biteth like a serpent.'"

Chuguchak.

February 1st, 1931.

"The other day I thought I had a bad cold, the first for five years. However, I piled on winter clothes, a thick woollen singlet, a woollen shirt, and two waistcoats, went to bed in them and the cold passed away without developing. When one gets a temperature out here, one thinks back on the patients one has been visiting—smallpox, typhoid, typhus, diphtheria, scarlet fever, which of these will it be, or perhaps just malaria or a common cold? It is a miracle to be in such close touch with so many sick people, yet keep well. I have only the one room as bedroom, study and hospital and it is sometimes crowded with all kinds and conditions of people. Truly God protects us."

Chuguchak.

March 18th, 1931.

"The weather is now becoming warmer. Ice

and snow are melting fast and the kites are sailing about looking for winter carrion. Yesterday when down at the river, watering my horse, I saw a seagull. It seems wonderful to have them so far inland. It reminds me of home.

"I promised to tell you about a wedding I attended recently and I realise it is the first wedding I ever went to. The bride was one of those two girls who would not drink the wine. She is eighteen years old, but we marry them young in Turkestan. She only arrived here six months ago, so you see we marry them off quick. The bridegroom was brother of my host, a nice youth about twenty with a ruddy face just like one of our Over Wyre farmer boys.

"The wedding was arranged for Friday, February 13th, so you see we are not superstitious. It was to take place at five p.m. and I was busy at translation work until five minutes to the hour, when I hurried off with my books, washed my face and arrived just in time to see the bride signing the register. I thought I was too late for the ceremony, but it was not so, only the Russian Church wisely makes the couple sign first and marries them after! The bride was dressed in white silk with a thin gauze veil over her head, and her hair hanging down in long curls in front of her shoulders. Two golden rings were handed to the priest which he passed backwards and forwards, first to the bridegroom's palm and then to the bride's. I wondered how he

managed to keep the right ring for each person. Then a basin of wine was brought along and they each took a sip, showing that they were to share their bitters and sweets.

"A whole lot of sledges waited outside the Church and the party sped merrily over the frozen snow to the house where two long lines of guests formed up in the big dining-room. The bride with her husband walked between them and knelt before Mr. K. and his mother, after which they rose to their feet and received the kisses and congratulations of their friends. It would have been quite all right for me to join in this part of the ceremony but I contented myself with kissing the bride's hand as I did not want to lose my last kiss. You will say: 'Oh, and when was that?' On May 11, 1928, at Liverpool Street Station with you and mother.

"A little later Mr. K. sent for me and put a bottle into my hand, saying: 'Just you look after this for me and don't let anybody take it from you.' About one hundred guests arrived and we had a rare spread and then a very amusing Russian ceremony came to light. A guest would rise and hold up a glass of wine calling out 'Gorka.' (It is bitter.) The bride and groom would pretend not to notice him but others would join the cry 'Gorka,' whereupon they had to rise and kiss one another. Mr. K. had to do the toasting and I knew the wedding would be a big test for him.

"The night before I had a talk with him and gave him a little card on which I had printed in Russian : ' Apart from Me ye can do nothing.' I also directed him to the verse : ' I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' After prayer he left me quite determined to carry through, though I wondered how he would manage it, and that brings me to the mysterious bottle. It held jam and water and whenever he had to make or respond to a toast he did it from that bottle.

"The people here are wonderfully kind and friendly. Mr. and Mrs. K. have made me one of the family. They are deeply religious and most hospitable."

Chuguchak.

April 29th, 1931.

"Last Sunday I attended my first Russian funeral. The Russian officer who was so badly frozen last winter died early on Sunday morning and was buried in the afternoon. He was carried to the Church in an open coffin, and the congregation stood round it holding lighted candles. The singing was beautiful. Sad, but not mournful, and with a touch of resignation and hope.

"At the close of the service another Russian custom was observed. An Ikon was placed on the breast of the corpse and the priest said : ' Now give

your last kiss to the dead.' The people filed past the coffin, pressing a kiss on the Ikon and then on the forehead of the corpse. Apart from being very unhygienic it seemed most revolting to me. I abstained from that part of the performance with a good conscience as I had been visiting the man twice a day before he died. Then the lid was fastened on the coffin, the candles blown out, and the procession set out for the cemetery, which lies on some rising ground about half-a-mile away.

"A man led the procession carrying a large wooden Greek cross for the grave, the people chanting a plaintive air as they walked along. A service was conducted at the grave side and the coffin lowered without any further ceremony. It was a beautiful day, clear blue sky, and the mountains of Russia, just a few miles across the plain, were decked in dazzling white from a recent snow-fall. The service was most beautiful and simple. When I mentioned about the kissing to I., he said with a smile: 'You English are ruled by the mind and we Russians by the emotions.'

"When I returned home I found a Qazaq waiting for me. He said that he had brought some medicine for me, as a friend of his had told him I wanted some. I asked what the medicine was, and he unloaded a sack from his horse, opened it and disclosed a live badger, muzzled and tied up by all four legs, yet quite game. How he had

managed to tie it up so securely I don't know, as he could hardly hold it as it was. It is a pity to deprive such a plucky little creature of its liberty. He wanted 3/6 for it. I felt like buying it and letting it go; however, Mr. K. bought it for the sake of its skin and for its fat, which is supposed to be good for rheumatism."

Chuguchak.

May 31st, 1931.

"The dictionary goes ahead steadily and September should see the rough draft finished, but when it will get polished I do not know. However, anyone can do that part of the business if I am unable to finish my task.

"I am working very hard these days and only getting about four hours sleep or less. Patients often come at five in the morning.

"Last week we had a picnic, it was a lovely change. I arranged to get on with my translation work early, for we aim at five pages a day. However, when the others started, there were still two pages to do, but I struck and left them for another time. I jumped aboard the carriage and we flew along in a thunder shower. There were fifteen of us, and we had games, fishing and races. Do you know I could beat them all at running, old as I am. I ran four successive races with their crack runners without a rest in between, and beat them

all. Some of the girls are wonderful horsewomen and it would have delighted you to see them racing at full gallop. As we wended our way home the nightingales sang all the way along. We were in before dark, then I worked till after midnight and was up next morning at four a.m."

It became necessary at this time for Mr. Hunter to take a journey to Shanghai, and as he travelled *via* Siberia he passed through Chuguchak on his way to Peking. On arriving at the frontier he was delayed by reason of an oversight through which the number had been omitted from his passport, and was held up until the error had been rectified.

Percy Mather was still working hard, but his translation work was nearly finished. He helped Mr. Hunter in all his preparations for travel, saw him off, and had time to hear of his safe arrival before himself setting out on the journey to Urumchi. It was the second week in November before he travelled and the cold Siberian winter had already closed in, so he ran the risk of meeting those dreaded blizzards in which so many have perished on the Dzungarian plain.

Chuguchak.

November 1st, 1931.

"A letter has arrived from Mr. Hunter saying

he has arrived safely. He seems to have had many very strange experiences and he says : ' I am quite behind the times as a railway traveller.' I expect he is ! He has not even been to the coast since 1908.

" I am finishing off a Kalmuk dictionary for him and writing out a copy of the Tatar dictionary, so I am kept busy. Did I tell you that I had started on a small Tatar glossary of about six thousand words ? Change is as good as rest, and the Tatars are well worth the effort. Besides I am now taking longer in bed, six hours at the very least and often seven, and am already beginning to fatten up.

" We have made good progress with the Kalmuk dictionary and expect to be through on Friday. The Kalmuks, you remember, are a branch of the Mongol family, Western Mongols. They are found in Turkestan, Kokonor, and on the Volga. Nimgir is a Kalmuk."

Chuguchak.

November 7th, 1931.

" MY DEAREST MOTHER,

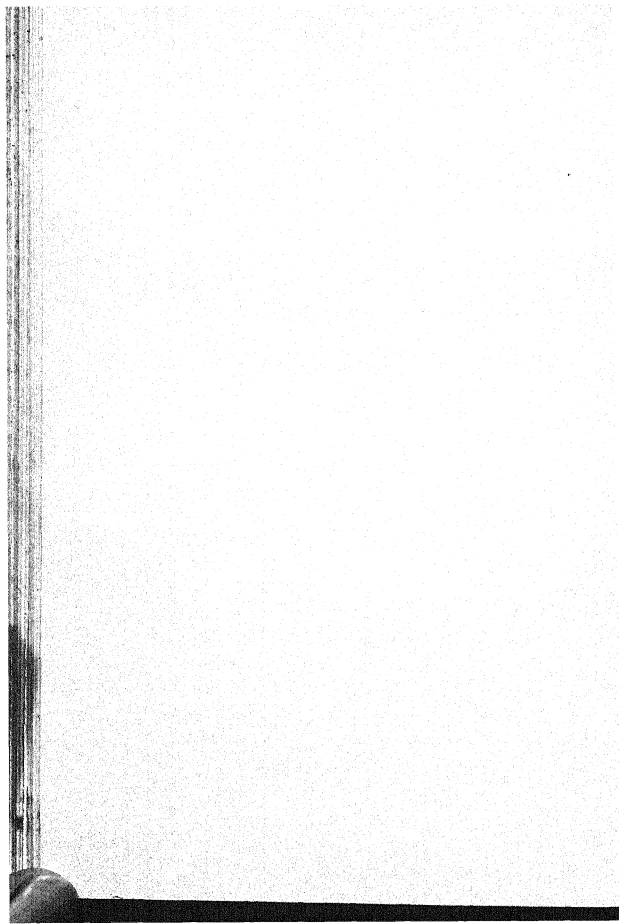
" This may be my last Sunday in Chuguchak, so I am writing my last Sunday letter to you. I finished my translation work last Friday afternoon. I wish I could have finished in August and had a good rest after it, but I took on the Tatar and the Kalmuk dictionaries and they have delayed me. However, I believe the work is well worth while

and I trust that it will be for the glory of God, the salvation of souls and the furtherance of the Gospel. I rejoice to know that you loved ones at home have also had your share in the work, both financially and otherwise. If new workers ever come up this way, they will now not need to struggle through without the help of dictionary and grammar, as I had to do. The nett result of my work here is : One Manchu Grammar, One Manchu Dictionary, One small book of Manchu and Mongol proverbs, one Tatar Dictionary, one Kalmuk Dictionary.

"The work was hard, but it has been done under happy conditions. The people here have been exceptionally kind to me and treated me like a beloved brother. Several came along today and said that many are crying because I am about to leave. This morning I went to Church as usual. Among the newly-arrived people is a choir-master and his wife, so he took charge of the singing and it was really heavenly, the finest I have heard since coming here.

"I leave for Urumchi tomorrow. I cannot call it 'home' now. Before furlough I always did, but not now, I cannot even call Chuguchak 'home,' but only dear old Fleetwood and that not because of the town itself, or even Balmoral Terrace, but because you are there. I could call any place 'home' so long as you, Edith and George were there."

THROUGH



THROUGH

PERCY MATHER returned in November, to find Urumchi in a strange temper. At no time had the town enjoyed freedom, but now everyone and everything was suspect. No one dared to speak openly, but the place was full of whisperings. It swarmed with spies and every man suspected all others of being in secret service. No one felt safe, least of all the rulers, for a spied-upon people is always a menace. There was trouble in Kansu, where a young Moslem military leader was pillaging one city after another, and his advance was steadily towards Turkestan. It was rumoured that his ambition was to overthrow the Government in that province. The Governor himself was in a state of panic, and being panic-stricken he committed acts of folly, cruelty and revenge which alienated those who, wisely handled, might have helped him.

It had been a steady principle with the two missionaries never to take part in political discussions and never to express their private opinion on public matters, but it was now a deep personal sorrow to Mather to find his Mongol friends, those who were trusted chiefs among the simple people, brought to the city under pretext of conference, then betrayed, imprisoned and executed.

A land like Turkestan, inhabited by people of varied races, languages and religions, is always difficult to administer, but now injustices were committed which antagonised the Turkis and enraged the tribesmen.

Even Mather, friend of all the world, and usually trusted by everyone, found himself under a cloud of suspicion, and for the first time in his life became aware of inimical forces at work against him. He realised that his uncompromising attitude on moral issues had made him enemies and that this crisis was the hour of opportunity for all enemies to pay off scores.

He missed Mr. Hunter's companionship and counsel in this dark time, but Mr. Hunter himself had only reached Shanghai shortly before hostilities broke out there, and his return was delayed indefinitely. The censorship of letters, always severely exercised, was now so strict that nothing which really mattered could ever be referred to, and Percy Mather's letters home became, from this time, merely dry accounts of everyday incidents. Just when his mind was full of things which he wanted to talk over all outlet of expression was denied him. He could neither write to Mr. Hunter, nor could Mr. Hunter tell him what he was passing through in Shanghai.

There were most disquieting rumours regarding his friends, the three women missionaries in Kansu. They were in an area controlled by brigand troops,

and for months he could get no word of them, as the postal route was closed. Then came more serious reports which caused him great anxiety, yet he could do nothing to help them.

His was not a nature which would be diverted from its habit of industry and service, but behind the routine of daily life was a consciousness of catastrophe at hand, for everyone knew that wild mutiny might break out at any moment. Eventually the three women were able to get free and make their way through a dangerous area to Urumchi. A few miles outside the town they met Percy Mather once more, and with him the faithful Nimgir. There was a great change in the two men. Nimgir was taut with passion, for the headman of his tribe was one of those who had been recently trapped and shot, and Mather was a wreck of his former self. The old spirit was still alert, but the body was worn and weary.

"I have never lived through such a time," he said. "It has been the hardest winter of my whole life. We are accustomed to bad rumours and rebellions here, but I have never known the storm-clouds so threatening as they are now."

During the weeks that followed it became abundantly evident that his physical powers were on the wane. Once he fainted at the table and though he made little of it and refused anything but immediate help, he knew, and his friends knew, that he

was ill. Short nights and heavy days took their full toll of his vitality. Patients came and patients went and he did all he could for them, but he moved about as a man detached and apart.

It was a relief to him to talk, but the whole tenor of his conversation centred on the coming break-up which he knew to be inevitable.

"We are not here for long," he would say. "There is a crash coming, and I want to get my manuscripts to Kashgar. Having put so much work into them, I don't want them to be wasted."

To those who had ears to hear, there was another and more subtle change in him, and its evidences were deeply suggestive, though they might have escaped notice. His favourite hymns had always been "Stand up, Stand up for Jesus," and "Jerusalem the golden." "These two hymns," he would say, "represent to me the two sides of Christian life—its warfare and its reward." Now things were changed, and when the strains of his fiddle sounded across the compound it played one hymn and one hymn only—"Abide with me, fast falls the even-tide." He sang it softly to a plaintive Russian tune which he had learnt among his Chuguchak friends.

In July Mr. Ridley was leaving for England and Mather escorted him as far as Chuguchak and the Russian border. Mr. Ridley had stayed on ever since 1926, when he so kindly came to Urumchi to be Mr. Hunter's companion.

It was balm to Percy Mather's overwrought mind, to find himself back among the simple, kind Chuguchak friends. "You will see from the address," he writes home, "that I am back in my old *quartiers*. This evening, as I had my first meal and took up my old seat at table (near the cook of course), she smiled as she made tea from the samovar and said, 'My, it seems just like old times,' and it really did feel like old times." He was one of the family again, and when Mr. K.'s cousin was taken very ill Mather had to drive into the country to see him, because if only he would visit him they would all feel that everything had been done, and, as Mr. K. naïvely said: "Even the sick man will die in peace."

August 1932.

"We left at 4.0 a.m. in a light cart and covered thirty miles in four hours and twenty minutes. I expected to find a lonely farm-house and was surprised to discover a Russian colony with about forty children. Some of the houses were quite well built, others were dug-outs. Natasha, with her father and mother, was living in a dug-out, just a hole in the ground, about four ft. deep and ten ft. square. There were holes in the sides for shelves, cupboards and hen's nests, and the projecting rafters were used for hanging clothes. They gave me a nice breakfast of home made cakes and bread with splendid butter and cream.

"The sick man was very ill indeed. I prayed with him and gave him some medicine which eased him very much and he had his first restful sleep for some time. I went to tea with other old friends who showed me their family album and pointed out a number of relatives who had met with a violent death. Louba is still hoping for her husband's arrival but has had no word of him for two years.

"They made me a comfortable bed in the cart and I was glad of it as I was only in bed for three hours the night before. In the morning I said goodbye. Natasha and her father drove me back to town. She has a sweet contralto voice, her father a deep rich bass, and I was tenor, so we had a pleasant musical journey."

So the weeks passed until the day when Percy Mather met his three friends again, outside the town. He and Nimgir rode out five miles, laden with water-melons, and spread a rug on the ground where they all sat to enjoy the simple feast and a friendly talk. Next day was Sunday and together they went to the Orthodox Church, then spent the rest of the day with the Baptist Congregation of Russian refugees. "It was a wonderful experience," he wrote, "to join in singing some of our English hymns translated into Russian: 'There is a better world they say,' 'When the roll is called up yonder,' 'We are out on the ocean sailing.'"

During the days that followed there was plenty of news, but none of it was good, for it told of more executions, and they were such as threw Mather's Chuguchak friends into the deepest despair. Simultaneously, messages couched in the most peremptory terms came from Urumchi, ordering Mather's immediate return to the capital. The Governor's personal permission to leave Turkestan, without which no traveller could move, had been promised weeks earlier to the three women, but the official document did not arrive and meanwhile other travellers' permits were cancelled and the whole atmosphere was tense. The only protest that Mather could make was to steadily refuse to obey orders and return to Urumchi, until he had seen the women safely to the border.

At last the day came when they were free to leave, and Percy Mather drove with them to the Russian frontier. Here they stood and sang together their travel hymn: "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah," then committed one another to God in prayer, and bade each other good-bye.

The last sight the writers had of him was standing by the military Guard House, waving farewell and calling out his last message: "Tell Mother I shall be home soon." Next day he wrote to his sister: "The ladies left yesterday morning. Topsy was with them and was very happy to go. I wish I could have gone too." Five days later,

under renewed pressure from the Governor, he returned to Urumchi, to face a most difficult situation which culminated in an accusation of using religious literature to cover revolutionary propaganda.

During the long talks which the party had together in Chuguchak, Percy Mather laid one responsibility on his friends: "Directly you get to a free country," he said, "write to the Mission in Shanghai and tell the Executive Council what is the real state of things over here. Warn them that this province is on the verge of a terrible revolution, and beg them to stop Mr. Hunter from coming, if they can. Tell them everything, for I can write nothing, meanwhile I shall be ready to leave for Kashgar at short notice and get my translations to a place of safety." The letter he was so anxious to have written was posted from Berlin, but it was too late to stop Mr. Hunter, who, with six new recruits, had already started for Turkestan.

It is easy to picture Percy Mather reaching his solitary quarters in Urumchi, where he lived such a comfortless life. Mr. Hunter's house was locked, and he must have had but little inclination to open it up. He was alone and homesick, facing difficulty and danger, and called upon to disprove false accusations. He wanted Mr. Hunter, yet he hoped he would not come. He would have welcomed new workers, but he knew that if they came just now, their lives might be in danger.

At this point a letter came from London, saying that Mr. Hunter and party had been definitely refused permission to travel *via* the Siberian Railway, so they intended to cross Mongolia by motor car and reach Hami from the east. On hearing this Mather put all his energy into preparing for their reception, and a few days later a telegram came announcing their safe arrival in Hami. On November 12th he wrote: "Mr. Hunter and party have arrived here safely and ever since I have been on the run. They were actually in Hami before I heard that they had even started. The six young men seem to be fine fellows and I would not change one of them. You can imagine how busy I am with all these extra mouths to feed, and hungry ones at that. The ladies made a large supply of jam before they went, but it is going very quickly. I have given up my house to four of the men and am now living with Mr. Hunter. There are thirteen of us altogether, including servants, and that means fourteen fires to be fed, in spite of increasing difficulty in getting fuel."

The two veterans realised the peril of the situation as no others could, and knowing that there must be food shortage directly the peasants took fright, Mather with Ningir, drove out into the country at great risk to himself to buy in supplies. "It was pretty cold," he writes, "twenty degrees below

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zero Fah. but the two horses which I bought last summer pulled splendidly."

Mr. Hunter also wrote: "Mather is sharing my house and I am very glad of this, as we are able to talk here freely and discuss matters together. We have prayer together each night before going to rest, but I am sorry to say that after this he generally goes back to work and stays up late studying some language."

In January the storm burst and Urumchi was attacked by Moslem forces. There was terrible slaughter and public buildings were used as hospitals for the wounded. All the young missionaries were commandeered for Red Cross work, and one of them, being a doctor, was overwhelmed with patients. Mather knew better than to attempt to write out any account of the events that were taking place, but here and there, in a family letter, he inserted a cryptic sentence which told the initiated something of what was happening.

The actual fighting lasted for days, and as the city was attacked by some ten thousand rebels, it was shut up for six weeks. Thousands were said to be killed, and the battlefield outside the town was a sight never to be forgotten.

Percy Mather was a man born to bear more than his share of every difficulty, and during the months before his death he exercised this fatal gift to the full. Food for the party depended on him, fodder

for the beasts was bespoken by him, coal for the fires was secured by him, arrangements for the new-comers were referred to him, and it was he who had to interpret for, and make possible, the medical work of the doctor as well as guard him from mistakes of inexperience which might be so serious in this critical hour. His was the alert mind which looks ahead and foresees coming events, which has insight to read the signs of the times and know what ought to be done, and one of his heaviest burdens was the exercise of that very capacity.

One day he came back from hospital feeling ill, so ill that he had to go to bed. The fever ran high and Mr. Hunter was torn with anxiety, but tried to find comfort in the fact that he had seen him very ill several times before. "Both here and in the mountains I had seen him very ill, yet he got better so quickly that naturally I expected the same thing to happen this time," he wrote.

This time it was not so and two weeks later, on 24th of May, 1933, Percy Mather died. As he lay dying, the young medical Emil Fischbacher, spent with overwork, also collapsed, and three days later he too died.

The missionary in China is often dependent on the charity of a friend for a piece of land in which to bury his dead. At Urumchi the Officials came to Mr. Hunter's help and gave a small piece of

ground outside the East Gate, close by the wireless station, where the mortal remains of the two men were laid. A few weeks later Mr. Hunter writes : "I have been very busy making a wall round the little plot. Workmen are difficult to get just now and wages are very high, so I have done a good deal of the foundation work myself. Ningir and I got the door properly balanced, ready for the builders to finish the job. It is almost impossible to get bricks just now, but an old building was pulled down in the drill ground and the Officials let us have some of the bricks for the foundation. This work will likely be finished in a day or two, and we will need to use sun-dried mud bricks for the upper part of the wall."

So the last picture shows the white-haired veteran and the simple hearted Mongolian raising a mud-brick wall to enclose the ground which has become sacred to them.

When the fateful news reached Fleetwood all the light which had centred round the hope of a speedy reunion was extinguished, but the brave mother and her remaining son and daughter were left to cherish in their hearts the memory of one who had never been known to fail in a duty, and who had sought from childhood to love the Lord his God with all his heart and mind and soul, and his neighbour as himself.

EPILOGUE

PERCY MATHER was a dreamer of dreams and as is the way with every dreamer, the vista of his desire was so wide that it could never be compassed in the space of one brief life. But that is quite immaterial, because what he glimpsed on earth was only that which he is some day to inherit.

He dreamed of a life spent among the Mongols—of one spent in bringing the knowledge of Christ to the Manchus—of saving the logical Tatar from threatening atheism—of reaching the wild Qazaqs of the Steppes—enough to occupy him for six times the fifty years that was his allotted span.

He dreamed other dreams—of becoming an accomplished scholar in all the tongues of Central Asia—of acquiring the skill of the surgeon that he might go to all these people with healing in his hands.

He dreamed yet one more dream—to have done it all, and at the last to come home to the quiet fireside in Fleetwood, sit near the window which looked out to sea, watch the ships come and go, and have his loved ones around him.

Was it the dreamer in him which produced the pioneer or was it the pioneer which produced the dreamer? The dreamer saw farthest but the

pioneer captured what the dreamer saw. The dreamer's eye pierced the clouds of obscurity which hung over the Central Asian tribes and the pioneer pressed forward to hack out the path which would make the accomplishment of his dream a possibility, till, unawares, the last effort was made and he was through, satisfied with Jesus, the pioneer and the perfection of faith.

What has Percy Mather left? Just a trail to show that someone has been that way, but that trail shouts encouragement to those who follow after. Yet the bush grows quickly and the virgin forest soon closes in with its tangle of undergrowth over the pioneer's track.

Therefore forward, vanguard!

They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
Through peril, toil, and pain :
O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train.